

CHALLENGES FACING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF A PARENTING  
PROGRAMME WITHIN A MAINSTREAM  
SCHOOL SETTING

by

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# Abstract

During the period of the Labour government schools were actively encouraged, and funded, to provide extended services to support parents. A number of schools decided to support families through the delivery of parenting programmes. Given that there was a paucity of research into parenting programmes when delivered in universal population samples in mainstream school settings this research seeks to gain understanding of their impact in this context. The research examined a cohort of parents participating in a programme in a mainstream school setting. In addition, key policy makers, both locally and nationally, were interviewed in order to garner knowledge of the influences on delivering parenting programmes. The research concluded that national policy was moving from a 'reactionary' to a 'preventative' model of delivering parenting programmes; this was being replicated in the local authority examined. Funding mechanisms for school had recently changed, removing the necessity for schools to support families; equally Ofsted was placing less emphasis on this aspect of the work of a school. Qualitative data in the fieldwork suggested there had been some improvements in the relationship between the parents and children studied; quantifiable data and evidence for improvements in the children's behaviour at the school was less robust.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Overview

The periods of childhood and adolescences were not seen as distinct periods in their own rights before the industrial revolution, children were seen as 'mini-adults' and therefore a cheap source of labour for the emerging industries in the eighteenth century. Although rights for children improved during the nineteenth century, consideration of the quality of parenting did not commence until around the 1970s. At this point parenting programmes began to be developed, with their origins in the USA. Since then there has been an expansion of programmes, which are now being used across the Western world. In Chapter 2 the evolution and definitions of parenting programmes will be explored and lead to the following working definition of programmes:

As a result of attending a parenting programme parents should have improved communication with their children, be able to deal with conflict better, and monitor their child more effectively. The parent should be offering more praise and being less critical, and as a consequence will feel they are able to influence the child's behaviour more successfully, and feel affirmed in their parenting style.

The research in this thesis aims to examine such programmes when undertaken in mainstream schools, examining their impact on children and parents as well as perceptions of parenting programmes.

## Rationale

I have been a Headteacher for the past thirteen years, for four years in an affluent semi-rural primary school setting, and then, from 2004 to 2008, in an inner-city junior school serving an area of high deprivation (Eagle Junior School). From 2009

to the present I have been Headteacher of a large junior school (Treeside Junior School) in a small, semi-rural market town. In addition in 2010-2011 I was Executive Headteacher of a school in Special Measures (Swallow Junior School (the school names used are fictitious in order to protect the identity of the participants in the fieldwork)).

As a Headteacher I am always striving to find new initiatives that will impact upon standards, and deliver the outcomes set out in the Every Child Matters green paper (Department for Education and Skills, 2004). Consequently, in 2005 I introduced The Incredible Years Basic Parenting Programme (Incredible Years, 2009) to my school, Eagle Junior School. The justification for delivering a parenting programme in my school was borne out of a personal belief that improvements in parenting would have a significant impact on both the child's behaviour in school and academic progress. Experience from the delivery of parenting programmes at Eagle Junior School aided the formulation of the methodology for the main fieldwork, undertaken at Swallow Junior School.

### **The research setting for the fieldwork**

Swallow Junior School is located in the middle of a housing area built mainly in the 1950s to serve the local coal-mining industry, which has now ceased in the area. The school is a mainstream junior establishment, and therefore educates children between the ages of seven and eleven. As a mainstream school, most pupils fall within what can be called the 'normal-range' of behaviour. There are though a number of children at the school who are receiving medication and / or support from

the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) due to diagnosed conduct disorders. The school was subject to Special Measures between November 2010 and April 2012.

On taking up post as Executive Headteacher at Swallow Junior School in December 2010 I was presented with a situation of severe pupil indiscipline and high exclusions. In my first term alone I fix-term excluded ten pupils and permanently excluded three. Significant change was therefore needed, and a raft of measures was implemented from January 2011, including the appointment of two behaviour assistants, the establishment of an in-house exclusion room and adoption of a new behaviour policy. The in-house exclusion room allowed the school to 'seclude' rather than exclude pupils, consequently significantly reducing the number of exclusions. Alongside these measures the Incredible Years programme (Incredible Years, 2009) was introduced in order to tackle what I perceived to be the 'root' of some of the behaviour issues i.e. that, in this area of high deprivation, in many cases poor parenting was the cause of behavioural difficulties.

## Research aims and title

Given the research setting, it was important that the research focussed on outcomes for pupils in the 'normal-range' of behaviour when parenting programmes are delivered as part of 'universal services' (the terms 'normal-range' and 'universal services' will be explored further in this thesis). There has been a great deal of research into parenting programmes but the majority of studies do not relate to my research setting i.e. a school setting. As will be shown in the literature review

(chapter 2), only two studies relate specifically to school contexts. The research in this thesis comes out of a desire to add to the body of knowledge regarding parenting programmes when delivered in mainstream schools, and it is anticipated that this work will aid both the researcher and other Headteachers when considering the adoption, or continuation, of parenting programmes within their establishments. It is also envisaged that this thesis will help programme developers when writing programmes to be delivered in schools, although it is accepted that this thesis will have limited specific generalisability.

The purpose of this thesis therefore is to examine the challenges facing the implementation of a parenting programme in a mainstream school setting, explored through a case study approach. It is planned that the research will answer the following key question:

- What understanding of parenting programmes can be gained through delivering a parenting programme in a mainstream school?

This central question leads to the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of national and local policy decisions regarding parenting programmes on the delivery of programmes in schools?
- What impact do parenting programmes have on a child's behaviour, both at home and in the school setting?
- What are the perceptions parents have of parenting programmes?

## Definitions

Given the sometimes indiscriminate use of terms it is important to offer a few definitions around the key vocabulary that will be used in this thesis.

### Definition of a parent

The word 'parent' has its origins in Latin – '*parens*' from the past-active participle of '*parere*' – 'to give birth', but the verbal noun 'parenting' wasn't recorded until 1959 (the term 'parentcraft' being used as an alternative from the 1930s). Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) define parents as:

“...those who provide significant care for children in a home or family context, including biological parents, step-parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents or other relatives.” (p6)

The Children Act 1989 outlines who legally has parental responsibility (PR) over a child and defines what this entails in section 3(1):

“All the rights, duties, powers, responsibility and authority, which by law a parent of a child, has in relation to the child and his property.”  
(Home Office, 1989)

Therefore an adult with PR will not always be the child's biological parent e.g. a step or adopted parent. Lindsey (1995) discusses these two types of parents, describing them as 'biological' (birth parents) and 'psychological parents' (non-birth parent). She also refers to parents as 'caretaker' (literally the person who '*takes care*' of a child), instead of the often-used term 'carer' or 'caregiver', which she argues suggests more of an inactive role.

For the purposes of this thesis the term 'parent' will be used, implying the person that is caring and nurturing the child on a day-to-day basis and developing an

attachment bond, although this person may not be their biological mother or father. Lindsey's (1995) term of caretaker will be avoided as the majority of programmes use the term parent. Equally, no distinction is to be made between 'birth' and 'non-birth' parents as it is the role that is important in discussions in this thesis, concurring with Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004).

### **Definition of a 'mainstream junior school'**

My research will concentrate on children educated within the mainstream environment and not those in Special Schools or Pupil Referral Units. The term 'mainstream school' grounds this research in the primary level of support i.e. universal services, which the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) define as '*not targeted according to risk*' (OECD, 2009). Examples of organisations delivering parenting programmes in targeted services include Social Care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

### **Definition of behaviour issues**

Throughout this research reference will be made to children with 'behaviour issues'; it is therefore worth considering what is meant by this term, as many children will exhibit behaviour issues at some point. These issues can be put on a continuum, from those behavioural issues which can be deemed as part of the expected developmental process, to those at the other extreme, classed as being severe. Those children falling within the expected developmental process for behaviour will be referred to in this thesis as being in the 'normal-range'. It is accepted that the term 'normal -range' behaviour is not a particularly satisfying term to use for this group of children, but is one used by academics, including Patterson, Mockford and

Stewart-Brown (2004). At the other end of the continuum there are a range of 'labels' to describe children with significant behaviour issues, including 'anti-social', 'delinquent' or having 'conduct disorders'.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) categorises children with behaviour issues as having "*behavioural, emotional and social difficulties*", which they define as:

"The term behavioural, emotional and social difficulties covers a wide range of SEN. It can include children and young people with conduct disorders, hyperkinetic disorders and less obvious disorders such as anxiety, school phobia or depression. There need not be a medical diagnosis for a child or young person to be identified as having BESD, though a diagnosis may provide pointers for the appropriate strategies to manage and minimize the impact of the condition." (p4)

Conduct disorder is the most common psychiatric disorder in childhood with a prevalence of 7% in boys and 3% in girls (Meltzer, Gatward, Goodman and Ford, 2000, cited by Scott *et al.*, 2001), with very similar statistics being quoted by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) NICE (2005b). NICE (2005b) defines conduct disorders as:

"...characterised by a repetitive and persistent pattern of antisocial, aggressive or defiant conduct. Such behaviour is more severe than ordinary childish mischief or adolescent rebelliousness, and it goes beyond isolated antisocial acts." (p2)

Soles *et al.* (2008) cite Webber and Sheuermann (1997), of the 10% of children with a mental health problem (which would include conduct disorders) only 1% of such children will receive a specialist service; it therefore can be assumed that a high proportion of children with conduct disorders will be in mainstream schools. Of those children who will go on to be classed as 'delinquent' in adolescent years i.e.



committing criminal behaviour, some will exhibit such behaviour at just this time in their life and can be referred to as 'adolescence-limited' delinquents, whereas there will be a much smaller group who will fall into the 'life-course-persistent' category (Webb, 2007). NICE (2005b) heard evidence for their report from 'experts' who stated that 40% of children with conduct disorders would go on to become young offenders later in life.

Behaviour issues can be split into two broad groups; '*outward directed problems*' which can include aggression, and '*inward directed behaviours*' including depression and anxiety disorders (Gibbs *et al.*, 2003). The '*outward directed problems*' include such behaviours as tantrums, refusal to accept instructions, destruction of property, stealing, violence, verbal aggression, rudeness and lying – some of which will be classed as 'anti-social behaviours' (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006).

At Swallow Junior School the majority of children fall within what can be classed as the 'normal range'; whilst acknowledging that the citation by Sole *et al.* (2008) of Webber and Sheuermann (1997) points to the potential of children with undiagnosed mental health issues, including conduct disorders, being present in the school.

## Contribution to the current field of knowledge and limitations of this research

### **Extending the existing field of knowledge**

As parenting programmes have only been in existence since the 1970s, and as the majority of research into programmes has been undertaken over the last ten years, this is a relatively new field of research. It is therefore the intention of the research to add to the existing field of knowledge, as there are very few studies which examine parenting programmes when undertaken with parents of children in mainstream schools falling within the 'normal range' of behaviour. The majority of research concentrates on the delivery of parenting programmes to parents of children within clinical ranges, and often in clinical settings. Yet parenting programmes are now being heralded as supportive interventions in mainstream settings (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006). Is there evidence to show that in such settings parenting programmes are effective?

### **Limitations of the research**

In Chapter 5 reflection will be held into the limitations of the research that occurred. It is acknowledged that by undertaking the research through a case study it automatically presents the researcher with limitations. Firstly, it will only allow the researcher to gain evidence about understanding of a specific parenting programme, at Swallow Junior School; generalisations will therefore be limited. Given that only one cohort of parents was examined, it is accepted that firm conclusions may not be made. Secondly, what will also be unclear is if there has been an influence on the programme that is unique to this programme, which has

impacted positively, or conversely, negatively on the outcomes; this is as a result of not being able to isolate variables. Such variables could include a change of class teacher for a pupil, additional support being provided to support the child with their behaviour (e.g. teaching assistant), change in peer group or change in circumstances at home. In addition there may be 'experimental mortality' (Bernstein, 1976) given that children may leave the school before all data is collected.

As the methodology relies on 'convenience sampling' it is acknowledged that this cohort may not be representative of parents that attend parenting programmes. This will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 3 (Sample selection). In addition, as a pilot study was not undertaken (due to time constraints) there will not be any data internally to compare with.

The 'latent trait' which the research intends to pursue is the relationship between the child and parents, yet this research does not intend to observe the child interacting with their parent. As a consequence observation of the impact will be via the outcomes of behaviour audits and through the parents' interpretations of the relationship. It is accepted that this may cause the research to have limitations.

## Outline of the thesis

### **Chapter 2 – Literature review**

The chapter will commence by defining what is meant by the term 'parenting programme' and what the aims of such programmes are. This will lead into discussion of the development of support for families over the last few decades and

an examination of different parenting styles. Literature will then be examined to ascertain if there is any evidence that there has been a decline in the effectiveness of parenting, leading to the need for the implementation of parenting programmes in the UK. In order to identify how best to support parents whose children have behaviour issues it is important to examine the risk factors associated with the development of such behaviours. Current literature will then be explored to identify who is attending parenting programmes before consideration is given to research examining the effectiveness of programmes, and the tools used to measure them.

### **Chapter 3 – Methodology**

In this chapter consideration is given to the wider contextual frameworks into which this research will be placed. Following consideration of pursuing a paradigm-driven or pragmatic-approach, a case is made for positioning the research within a question-led pragmatic-approach using a mixed-methods methodology with a triangulation design through a case study approach. Reflection will then take place regarding the research design and method to be followed.

### **Chapter 4 – Fieldwork**

This chapter will present the findings of the fieldwork undertaken at Swallow Junior School into the effectiveness of a parenting programme run at the school between April 2011 and July 2011, and the challenges that were encountered. It will commence by presenting interviews with policy makers, therefore linking policy with practice. Following this, the outcomes of the programme implemented in the summer term 2011 will be presented. The evidence for this will be from a number of

sources including interviews with parents and the programme facilitators. Other qualitative and quantitative data from the research fieldwork will also be presented.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations**

Using evidence from the fieldwork chapter, discussion will examine if there is evidence that the programme at Swallow Junior School had an impact on improving behaviour at home and school. The interviews from policy-makers will also be explored to examine the direction of current policy and the impact of austerity cuts in order to garner understanding of parenting programmes when delivered in a mainstream school setting.

This chapter will also include conclusions concerning the impact of the programme at Swallow Junior School, and recommendations for other schools embarking on delivering parenting programmes.

## Chapter 2 – Literature Review

### Introduction

The literature review commences by defining parenting programmes and attempts to distinguish between initiatives aimed at supporting education and developing parents' academic skills, with those whose specific aim is to improve the parent / child relationship. Consideration is then given to the six main philosophical approaches followed by developers of programmes and explores how programmes can take either a preventative or restorative perspective. Following an outline of the structures used by programmes, examples of specific programmes are then identified in this review.

Evidence is then presented to consider if forms of parenting can be classified into groups, and which discipline methods are seen as being effective and ineffective. Given the increased use of parenting programmes across western societies, literature will also be reviewed to examine if there is any evidence that suggests that there may be a decline in the effectiveness of parenting, leading to the need to use such programmes. As parenting programmes have been developed specifically to improve children's behaviour through the improvement in the child / parent relationship the literature review then examines the identified risk factors for the formation of poor child behaviour and the protective factors which may mitigate their impact.

The development, and increased use of parenting programmes, is shown to be symptomatic of an increased awareness of the role of the family since the 1970s

and an aspect of society's response. The literature review will examine the evolution of government policy and detail the provision now available to families. Given the increased use of parenting programmes, consideration will be given to the literature outlining the effectiveness of such courses, and how this effectiveness is measured.

Later the four main types of parents who attend parenting programmes will be identified – with discussion as to whether their varying needs can be met through a universal programme approach, in contrast to programmes aimed at specific groups.

## Defining parenting programmes

When examining literature concerning structured support for improving parenting there are a number of terms which occur. The terms include '*parent-training programmes*', '*parent education programmes*', '*parenting support*', '*parental involvement*', '*parenting programmes*' and '*parents' skills programmes*' (Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe, 2004) – the common factor being that they contain the word parent. Smith (1996) claims that it is not always easy to categorise programmes, or to draw boundaries between them, and Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) state that many of the terms used are interchangeable. To some degree they are interchangeable, but there are also two distinct groups of programmes within this raft of terms, which Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) categorise as:

- 1) Parental support, which they define as, "*the provision of parenting skills training, advice and guidance for parents*";

- 2) Family learning, of which Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) give examples of reading to children, encouraging and helping with homework, or being a parent governor.

The programmes to be examined in this thesis fall within what Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) refer to as '*parental support*'. The research by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) aimed to discover the relationship between parental involvement and pupil achievement / engagement. As a consequence its terms of reference were rather narrow as its remit was not to examine programmes aimed at improving the parent / child relationship. It is programmes aimed at developing this relationship that this thesis will be examining. Smith (1996) identifies programmes with the aim of improving the parent / child relationship as having the features of using a group-work approach, are relatively structured, formalised and can be replicated with other groups of parents. The majority of researchers refer to such schemes as '*parenting programmes*' (Smith, 1996); it is this term that this research will use. Despite the limitations of the work of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) the research does have some relevance to this research, including the statement:

"Parental involvement in the form of 'at-home' good parenting has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups." (p10)

### **Aims of parenting programmes**

The definition presented by Smith (1996) of 'parenting programmes' gives an insight into the aims of these courses:



“...a complex process of raising awareness about parenting by means of participating in a series of group sessions whose overt purpose is to allow parents to find ways of improving their parenting, or to feel affirmed in their own parenting methods.” (p2)

This statement explicitly states that the process is complex – changing a relationship will always be challenging (Fortune -Wood, 2002). It also acknowledges the utilisation of group settings, which evidence suggests is vital for the success of programmes (NICE 2005b). NICE (2005b) also state that delivering programmes to individual parents should be avoided unless, “...*there are particular difficulties in engaging with the parents or...needs are too complex to be met by group-based programmes...*” The definition given by Smith (1996) implies that for some parents attending courses, the learning that they will go through will be a self-belief journey, when they realise what they are doing is ‘*good enough*’, a phrase coined by Winnicott (1953). The use of the term ‘*allow parents*’ puts the emphasis on the parents’ learning journey rather than the teaching, and places programmes within ‘social learning theory’ (Bandura, 1969). Social learning theory is defined by Ormrod (1999) as:

“...learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation, and modeling (*sic*).” (p116)

A further definition of parenting programmes gives more understanding of programmes:

“...any intervention for parents aimed at reducing risks and promoting protective factors for their children, in relation to their social, physical and emotional well-being”.

(Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe, 2004, p21)

Despite stating that parenting programmes aim to promote protective factors Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) do not specify what these are. In fact, in the conclusion to their research they state that the literature review found little evidence of how programmes build in protective factors. They do state that sometimes risk and protective factors are “*two halves of the same coin*” i.e. by identifying and then aiming to reduce a risk, one is developing protective factors.

Another insight into parenting programmes is offered by Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) who outline potential outcomes of programmes for parents as being:

“...improved communication with their child; improved supervision and monitoring; reduction in conflict and better approaches to dealing with it when it occurred; better relationships, giving more praise and approval; being less critical and losing their temper less; feeling better able to influence behaviour; and feeling better able to cope with parenting in general.” (p4)

Deconstructing this lengthy definition of parenting programmes it would appear that Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) see the aim of programmes as improving relationships and developing what Patterson (1982) refers to as ‘*family management practices*’.

### **Philosophies underpinning parenting programmes**

Wolfendale and Einzig (1999) state that there are many philosophical approaches used by parenting programmes; they identify six theories which underpin such programmes; Behavioural, Cognitive, Adlerian, Psychodynamic, Humanistic and Attachment. Behavioural and Cognitive fall within the broad ‘behavioural approach’ whilst the other four can be grouped within the ‘relationship approach’. Wolfendale

and Einzig (1999) give examples of programmes used to support the different philosophical approaches as, Incredible Years, to deliver a behavioural approach, Parenting Effectiveness Training as a humanist relationship approach and Positive Parenting Programme (often referred to as Triple P), as an Alderian relationship programme. They do not specify examples for Cognitive, Psychodynamic or Attachment approaches. Behavioural and relationships approaches are defined by NICE (2005a) as:

“...[a behavioural approach focuses] on teaching parenting skills to remedy the causes of problem behaviour, for example ignoring the latter and praising co-operative behaviour, building a relationship with the child through child led play, and establishing consistent boundaries with ‘time-out’ for infringement. Relationship programmes...aim to help parents understand their own emotional world and behaviour as well as that of their child and to improve communication with their child.” (p5)

However NICE (2005a) state that most programmes take a combined approach by using elements of both behavioural and relationship approaches, such as the Triple P and Incredible Years programmes (which contradicts Wolfendale and Einzig (1999) which stated that the Incredible Years was simply a behavioural programme).

Hiscock *et al.* (2008) show that parenting programmes can work in one of three ways; firstly they can help to reduce ‘*parenting risks*’ i.e. factors that can lead to the development of behavioural issues in a child as a result of the way a child is parented, even if behaviours have not yet developed; secondly the reduction in behavioural issues exhibited by the child. Thirdly, they can help to reduce maternal mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress.

Parenting programmes can therefore be seen as both preventative and restorative (Hiscock *et al.*, 2008) and follow a number of different approaches underpinned by six main theories, the most prevalent of which are the behavioural and relationship approaches. A number of programmes combine the behavioural and relationship approaches in order to not only alter the parent's behaviour towards the child but also allow the parent to reflect on the child / parent relationship in order to improve this.

### **Structure of parenting programmes**

In its meta-analysis of parenting programmes, NICE (2005b) outlined the structure of programmes. They identify that programmes are usually short-term, lasting between 1 ½ - 2 hours per week for eight to twelve weeks and mostly undertaken as group based projects with between six to twelve participants. In complex situations programmes may be delivered on a one-to-one basis. Groups are facilitated by one or two leaders; in most programmes these facilitators require supervision at regular intervals. The majority of programmes have a written manual with handouts for parents and some use videos / DVD clips of interactions between parents and their children. All parenting programmes include 'experiential learning' through homework practice with children. Programmes are mainly conducted with parents with no direct involvement of the child (NICE 2005b); although occasionally children do participate, for example the Incredible Years programme has a scheme entitled 'The Dina Dinosaur Classroom Curriculum (Preventative) Programme' (often referred to as the Dinosaur Club or Dinosaur School), which can run alongside the parenting programme (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2005).

## **Examples of parenting programmes**

Pugh, De'Ath and Smith (1994) reported a sizeable increase in programmes between 1984 and 1994, although they do not reflect on the possible reasons for this. This increase appears to have continued as the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP) identified one-hundred and thirty-eight programmes in 2010; of which sixty-one programmes had passed through its quality control measures to be referred to as 'evidence' based programmes, with the rest self-assessing and awaiting quality control (NAPP, 2010).

The Home Office, through its 'Respect Agenda' (Cabinet Office, 2006), identified Positive Parenting Program, Mellow Parenting, Multi-systematic therapy, Strengthening Families Programme and the Webster-Stratton 'Incredible Years' as having '*the strongest evidence of effectiveness*' (although it doesn't state its criteria for '*effectiveness*' or cite any additional evidence to support its claims). Four of these programmes are now outlined.

### **Positive Parenting Program (Triple P)**

The 'Triple P' parenting programme emanates from the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland, Australia where it was developed by Professor Matt Sanders. It is described by Sanders and Morawska (2006) as:

“...a public health approach to parenting...designed as a comprehensive population-led system of parenting and family support. It aims to enhance parental competence, prevent dysfunctional parenting practices, and promote teamwork between partners...” (p479)

There are a number of levels to the scheme, commencing with an information campaign for all parents, and then progressing up to highly specialist programmes. The levels of intervention are outlined in table 2.1.

Level of intervention	Target population
Level 1 Universal Triple P	Media-based parent information campaign
Level 2	Information and advice for a specific parenting concern
Level 3	Narrow focus parenting skills training
Level 4	Broad focus parenting skills training
Level 5	Intensive family intervention
Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Parents of children with a disability</li> <li>b) Parents at risk of child maltreatment</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1: The Positive Parenting Programme levels**

### **Incredible Years**

Carolyn Webster Stratton at the University of Washington, USA, developed 'Incredible Years'. There are a number of different Incredible Years programmes; the most commonly used is the 'Basic' programme which teaches parenting techniques through watching videos in a group situation. The videotapes portray situations and ways of responding to these, which the facilitators then explore with the participants, often through role play. In addition there is an 'Advance' programme which supports parental relationships and a 'Partners' programme to help develop parent – teacher relationships (Gibbs *et al.* 2003).

### **Mellow Parenting**

The Mellow Parenting programme is based upon the Newpin-and-Peep programme which was developed for pre-school children in areas of high disadvantage (Lloyd,

1999 cited in Bell, 2005). The programme originally emanated from Glasgow, as a therapeutic intervention and follows a relationships approach. This programme is aimed at parents with complex needs; Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) state that for parents to attend the programme they must be experiencing:

“...parenting difficulties or relationship problems, including child protection issues; family violence; or at least two of the following (a) child behaviour problem (b) mother with maternal health problems (c) difficulties with current family relationships or with family or origin.” (p25)

The original programme has been adapted on many occasions, and the developers are happy to support this as they see the programme as, “...*partly a way of working rather than a tightly prescribed curriculum...*” (Mellow Parenting, 2010). The course is run as full day sessions for fourteen weeks.

### **Strengthening Families Programme**

The Strengthening Families Programme was developed in the 1990s at the University of Utah in the USA by one of their professors, Dr Karol Kumpfer. The programme was originally for high-risk families with children aged six to eleven years. Since then courses have been devised for lower risk families and the age range extended from three to sixteen years of age. The programme includes culturally adapted versions (Strengthening Families Programme, 2010).

### **Families and Schools Together (FAST)**

In addition to the five programmes identified by The Home Office, through its ‘Respect Agenda’ (Cabinet Office, 2006), the Department for Education also

identified the Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme as enabling good results, especially when delivered in a school setting (Goodall *et al.*, 2011).

## **Summary**

Parenting programmes can therefore be defined as complex, group based interventions aimed at specifically improving the parent / child relationship, reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors in order to promote the child's well-being. Such programmes can follow a number of philosophical approaches, with the main ones being the behavioural and relationships approaches. Through an examination of the literature, the researcher has developed the following operational definition that will be used to focus the literature review further:

***As a result of attending a parenting programme parents should have improved communication with their children, be able to deal with conflict better, and monitor their child more effectively. The parent should be offering more praise and being less critical, and as a consequence will feel they are able to influence the child's behaviour more successfully, and feel affirmed in their parenting style.***

## **Parenting styles and discipline methods**

Baumrind (1971) (cited in Baumrind 1991) classified the styles of parenting exhibited by parents into four main groups. Baumrind (1991) builds upon her previous work and cites Baumrind (in press b) in identifying four styles of parenting



– authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting. These can be defined as:

Authoritative – parents who are demanding and responsive, they monitor and set clear expectations for their children’s behaviour. Such parents are assertive but not ‘intrusive’ or restrictive. In disciplining their children they are supportive rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive and socially responsible.

Authoritarian – parents are demanding and directive, but not responsive. They expect obedience and for their orders to be obeyed. Authoritarian parents set clear boundaries and monitor their children’s activities carefully. Sorkhabi (2005) states that this style can include parenting dimensions of shaming and unilateral obedience demands.

Permissive – these parents are more responsive but non directive. Their style of parenting can be classified as ‘lenient’ and ‘non-traditional’. They don’t require mature behaviour, allow self-regulation, and avoid confrontation.

Rejecting-neglecting – parents in this group are disengaged and are neither demanding nor responsive. They do not monitor, and are not supportive of their children. Such parents may be neglectful in their childrearing or actively reject the child.

Baumrind (1968), Pugh and De’Ath (1984), Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004), Sorkhabi (2005) and Layard and Dunn (2009) contend that the ‘authoritative

parenting' style is seen as the '*optimum*' style because, "*it gives rise to optimal outcomes in terms of aspects of psychological development*" (Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown 2004, p3), a finding supported by Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004). Layard and Dunn (2009) refer to this style as, '*loving yet firm*', although they do not define in detail what they mean by the term 'firm', only making reference to boundaries being explained to children in the context of a '*loving relationship*'.

Baumrind (1968) outlines the effects on child behaviour of the different approaches to parenting, in particular of permissive, authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles; no reference is made to the effects of the rejecting-neglecting category (as this fourth dimension was not identified by Baumrind until later (Greenspan, 2006)). For her research Baumrind (1968) reviewed twelve existing studies, and rather than outline the links between the three styles of parenting and the relationships and behaviour of children from each group, she proposed a number of propositions concerning the effects on child behaviour of disciplinary techniques. For example, she examined the proposition that "*punishment has inevitable harmful effects and is an ineffective means of controlling child behaviour.*" She concludes that the '*side-effect*' of punitive and hostile punishment for children is cognitive and emotional problems, including:

“...hostile withdrawal, hostile acting out for a child, including personality problems, nervousness, and reduced schoolroom efficiency”

(Baumrind, 1968, p896)

With regards to those parents who make huge demands on their children to be 'orderly' and undertake household duties, Baumrind (1968) concludes that such children only become rebellious and anti-social if their parent's behaviour is

*“repressive, hostile and restrictive.”* If the parent though provides surroundings that are conducive to a child’s well-being, Baumrind (1968) states that such demanding parents do not produce children with negative behaviours.

Baumrind (1968) discusses parents who have a firm control of their children, and quotes the research of Hoffman (1960), which concluded that parental assertiveness and child submissiveness are not correlated.

Greenspan (2006) dismisses Baumrind’s theory that the authoritative style is the preferred discipline method for parents. Outlining his own research combined with that of Lewis (1981) and Grolnick (2003), he concludes that the ‘two-factor’ model of control that underpins the four categories identified by Baumrind (1968) of ‘*control*’ and ‘*warmth*’, should be replaced with a three-factor model. This new model includes the factor of ‘*tolerance*’, which he identifies as:

“Parents of the most socially competent children are adept at knowing when they have a problem and when they do not. An example of the latter would be when a child expresses negative affect while complying fully with a request.” (Greenspan, 2006, p5)

He goes on to state that Baumrind had identified this group of parents herself and referred to it as ‘*harmonious*’ parenting (high warmth, moderate control and high tolerance), but had seen such parenting as an ‘*anomaly*’. Greenspan (2006) contests that harmonious parenting should be advocated to parents as the most effective parenting style, rather than Baumrind’s authoritative style.

Although Layard and Dunn (2009), Sorkhabi (2005), Pugh and De’Ath (1984) and Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004) identify the authoritative parenting style to

be the most effective parenting style one needs to be cautious about applying this to all sections of society due to cultural differences.

Other researchers have avoided classifying parents into discreet categories and have instead concentrated on the methods used to prevent behaviour issues arising and the means of disciplining children (Patterson, 1982; Hiscock *et al.*, 2008; Sanders *et al.*, 2006). Sanders *et al.* (2006) and Patterson (1982) have identified a number of techniques used by parents as having an effective impact on the child's behaviour. These include withholding parental attention when negative behaviour is presented by the child, and then conversely, giving positive reinforcement when good behaviour is exhibited by the child, for example, giving the child a hug, wink or treat. Carolyn Webster-Stratton, developer of the Incredible Years programme, is clear about the essential foundations for successful parenting. Interviewed for the Irish Times Healthplus she stated that the foundations were play, praise, tangible rewards, limit setting, ignoring bad behaviour, time out, and teaching children to problem solve (Thompson, 2009). She went on to state that in some cultures parents can find it difficult to offer praise to their children but she states:

“I’ve never seen a child with behaviour problems come out of a family with too much praise. In fact, it’s not uncommon to hear 40 to 50 critical statements – commands and corrections and criticism – directed at a child in half an hour.” (Thompson, 2009, p12)

Ineffective discipline methods, referred to as ‘*non-optimal parenting*’ by Scott, O’Connor and Futh (2006) and ‘*coercive parenting*’ by Patterson (1982) and Sanders *et al.* (2006), are reflected upon by a number of researchers. Hiscock *et al.* (2008) claim that the most ineffective parenting methods are harsh or abusive

parenting and lack '*warmth*'. Patterson (1982) identified ineffective disciplinary methods as; shouting or becoming angry, making threats and not following them through, and holding or cuddling the child to calm them down. Sanders and Morawska (2006) also contend that coercive parenting can subsequently lead to the development of challenging behaviour as the child fails to develop self-control and social skills, although as Fortune-Wood (2002) acknowledges, it is impossible to quantify the impact of coercive parenting. 'Smacking' is identified as an ineffective parenting technique by a number of authors (Incredible Years, 2009; Patterson, 1982; Hiscock *et al.* 2008).

Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004) contend that the 'authoritative parenting' style is an optimum approach in White-European communities as it leads to the psychological developments required in those communities. They outline these '*psychological developments*' as including being highly competitive and individual, which may not be favoured in all societies. They cite the work of Gross (1996) who showed that in African-American and Asian cultures greater value is placed upon interdependence. Moran, Gbate and van der Merwe (2004) also illustrate concerns by stating that some cultures expect children to show deference to adults, which is contrary to many parenting programmes, which are built upon mutual respect and negotiation.

Cultural differences in parenting have been exemplified in two best-selling books, which have brought the issues to the attention of the general public. Chua (2012) discusses her own parenting style, which she refers to as '*Tiger Mother*' based on

Chinese parenting; and Druckerman (2012) who discusses the difference between Anglophone parenting and that in France where she was rearing her own children.

Chua (2012) summarises the main differences between Chinese parenting and Western parenting as:

“Western parents try to respect their children’s individuality, encouraging them to pursue their true passions, supporting their choices, and providing positive reinforcement and a nurturing environment. By contrast, the Chinese believe that the best way to protect their children is by preparing them for the future, letting them see what they’re capable of, and arming them with skills, work habits, and inner confidence that no one can ever take away.” (p63)

Chua (2012) claims that Western parents are too concerned about the child’s self-esteem, and as a parent trying to parent in the Chinese style in the U.S.A:

“You have to go up against an entire value-system – rooted in the Enlightenment, individual autonomy, child-development theory, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...” (p161)

Druckerman (2012) claims that the French approach to parenting children is very different to that in the U.K. and U.S.A – she outlines the French style as being governed by a framework or ‘*cadre*’:

“The French seem to have a whole different framework for raising kids. When I ask parents how they discipline their children, it takes them a few beats just to understand what I mean. ‘Ah, you mean how do we *educate* them,’ they ask. *Discipline*, I soon realize, is a narrow, seldom-used term that refers to punishment, where as *education* (which has nothing to do with school) is something they imagine themselves to be doing all the time.” (p9)

Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004) point out that UK society is increasingly comprised of families whose heritage is not white UK and their parenting styles may therefore differ from the ‘perceived’ ideal of some professionals. This being said, Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004) acknowledge that there are certain

parenting practices that, “*transcend cultural differences*” such as warmth and responsiveness.

The literature review has therefore shown that researchers have concluded that the authoritarian style of parenting is the most effective for raising a child in white - European communities. This being said, there is also evidence to suggest that a variation on this model, referred to as the ‘harmonious’ style may be more effective. Such parents are neither harsh nor lenient and closely monitor their child’s activities. When working with parents from different cultures practitioners will need to reflect upon the intended outcomes which that society expects for its children. Effective discipline is based on mutual respect and negotiation and includes giving praise, withholding parental attention and rewarding good behaviour. Although an effective parenting style and discipline methods have been identified in the literature review caution should be exercised in stating that parents fall within one of these groups, or that the parents utilise only the effective / ineffective discipline methods. No evidence has been found to suggest that parents follow one route throughout the child’s development.

## Has there been a decline in effective parenting?

*“The symptoms of a broken society are all around us. Over a million British youngsters are neither in education nor a job. The incidence of knife-crime has doubled in two years. New victims fall prey to the feral young on an almost daily basis. ...But the main problem is not economic. The decline of the family is the greatest cause of our social discontents.”*

(Anderson, 2007, p27)

Such berating of society is common in certain sections of the British media; their articles often contain the phrases '*run-down-council-estate*', or '*broken-Britain*', and point to the most deprived sections of communities. The perceived decline in parenting in Britain came into sharp focus in August 2011 during the summer riots. This 'perception' may not only exist within this country, but also internationally; the riots of 2011 were global news and the Canadian newspaper 'Global and Mail' had many articles on these disturbances. These articles included analysis of why the riots had taken place; according to that newspaper '*bad parenting*' was a significant contributory factor:

“With alcoholic, addicted or absent parents (how’s that for a triple-A rating?), many kids are left to roam, with no role models except their cousins in gangs, and no viable economic future they can visualize.”  
(Michael, 2011, pF3)

Following the 2011 riots, David Cameron was also quoted as saying;

“When I say parts of Britain are sick, the one word I would use to sum up is responsibility...it’s a lack of proper parenting, a lack of proper upbringing, a lack of proper ethics, a lack of proper morals. That is what we need to change.”  
(Cameron, 2011, pA3)

Caution needs to be exercised in reading too much into these denouncements – are the press and politicians creating their own myth? The assertions of Anderson (2007) are not backed-up by research; how do the figures he quotes concerning youngsters not in education or employment link to a decline in society? Are all the knife crimes he comments on perpetrated by the young? He finally asserts that there has been a 'decline of the family'. As we are all born with 'family', i.e. biologically we must have a mother and father with associated grandparents, and potentially, siblings, what does he mean by decline? One must presume that he is



alluding to a reduction in the effectiveness of the family to support the child. Is the picture painted by Anderson (2007) an accurate précis of UK society? Or do his words merely reflect a section of society. Articles are equally likely to be printed showing a highly over protective body of parents – the perspective often placed on middle class families by the press. This is illustrated by Millar (2008) in an article reflecting on families “*teaching*” the child in the womb. Cole (2011) refers to such families as ‘*over-parenting*’, which he claims can lead to children being “*self-centred, obnoxious and unemployable*”. But as Millar (2008) goes on to reflect, “*these hyper-parents are...but a tiny minority*”. And therein probably lies the truth – neither are actually reflective of British family life in the twenty-first century.

Parenting can be seen as a continuum, with the average British family somewhere in the middle of the two extremes portrayed by Anderson (2007) and Millar (2008); a conclusion reached by Tony Blair as his tenure as Prime Minister came towards an end. Reflecting in the Daily Telegraph on the society that he had presided over for the previous ten years Blair (2007) stated:

“...what (I) identified as a generalised breakdown (in society) is no such thing. The overwhelming proportion of young people I meet today are law-abiding, respectful and caring – in many ways much more so than the generation of which I was part in the 1970s. Most parents find it a real struggle today to bring up children. But most parents manage. Most are proud of their children. Most children respect their parents. The reality is that we are dealing with a very small number of highly dysfunctional families and children whose defining characteristic is that they do not represent society as a whole. They are the exception, not the rule. They do not respond to more investment. They do not conform to social norms.” (p26)

The contention by Blair (2007), that there are only a small number of dysfunctional families and that the current generation is more respectful than those in the 1970s, leads one to question, as with Anderson (2007), his evidence for this. It also raises

the question of how to measure family life in order to ascertain if effective parenting has declined as proposed by Anderson (2007) or actually improved as suggested by Blair (2007). The literature review now turns to examine if there is support for either the implied claims of Anderson (2007) or Blair (2007). Has parenting improved or declined?

Research shows that the concern about poor behaviour in children is not confined to the UK. For example, in Australia one study showed that one in seven children aged four to seventeen are reported to have behavioural issues (Hiscock *et al.*, 2008). In another Australian study parents were asked if they felt their children had behavioural or emotional problems and one in three stated they thought they had, with one in ten expressing a concern for high levels of oppositional behaviour (Sanders *et al.*, 2006). The fact that parenting programmes are described as 'widespread' in Germany (Lauth, Otte and Heubeck, 2009) also points to issues in that country. The majority of research though comes from the U.S.A (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006), again suggesting a concern for child behaviour there. There has been no research found to suggest that parenting programmes are being employed in the developing world – although one cannot conclude that there are not concerns about child behaviour in those countries as well.

No research has been found which specifically aims to quantify if parenting has improved or declined. What has been found is evidence from the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2007) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009) who have attempted to measure the

quality of family life from an international perspective; these therefore allow researchers to make comparisons between societies.

The UNICEF (2009) research aimed to quantify outcomes for children. They considered six dimensions to child well-being, including '*family and peer relationships*'. In the UNICEF research each of the twenty-one OECD countries was assessed against the dimensions and ranked one to twenty-one (one being the highest scoring country), and given an overall ranking; the Netherlands came top and the UK bottom of the rankings. For family and peer relationships the top five ranking countries were Italy (1<sup>st</sup>), Portugal, Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium. The five lowest ranking countries were Finland, Canada, Czech Republic, United States, and finally the United Kingdom in 21<sup>st</sup> position. The indicators they used to quantify effective family life were:

- percentage of children living in single-parent families
- percentage of children living in stepfamilies
- percentage of children who reported eating the main meal of the day with their parents more than once a week
- percentage of children who reported that parents spend time '*just talking to them*'

The 'Doing Better for Children' study (OECD, 2009) involved thirty countries and examined material well-being, housing and environment, educational well-being, health and safety, risk behaviours and quality of school life. The rankings for the UK are outlined in table 2.2.

Material well-being	Housing and environment	Educational well-being	Health and safety	Risk behaviour	Quality of school-life
12 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>

Note: All are ranked out of thirty with the exception of the 'quality of school-life' category which is out of twenty-five. One marks the best performing country.

**Table 2.2: UK rankings in the OECD (2009) study of thirty countries**

The statistic of most relevance to this thesis is the 'risk behaviours' figure showing that the UK ranks twenty-eighth out of thirty countries, with only Turkey and Mexico fairing worse. Their research claims that children in the UK are undertaking behaviours which put them at risk of harm. This may suggest that parents are poorly supervising their children and / or they have little control over their children's actions. Patterson (1982) claims that poor supervision of children is a risk factor in the development of anti-social behaviour.

The 'Good Childhood Enquiry' commissioned by The Children's Society (Layard and Dunn, 2009) was another attempt to ascertain the quality of childhood and family life, but only in the UK. The enquiry raised concerns about the impact of the rise in parental conflict, working parents and excessive individualism but did not claim outright that there has been a decline in family life.

Caution needs to be exercised when analysing these sets of data. The indicators in the UNICEF (2007) research are a very crude means of identifying if a child has an effective relationship with their parents, and do not take account of cultural and religious differences. Equally, the risk factors identified in OECD (2009) of drunkenness, teenage pregnancies and smoking may have more to do with peer pressure than parenting. Another problem with the UNICEF (2007) and OECD (2009) data is that they are not comparative to previous periods and therefore it is

not possible to show if there has been a decline or improvement in family life in the UK from this data. The data also tries to use statistics on the well-being and happiness of a child; such dimensions are acknowledged as being difficult to measure (Martin, 2007). Another issue with the data from UNICEF (2007) and OECD (2009) is that the countries which are compared are in reality randomly selected. The groups of countries identified have been formed in order to cooperate with one another – they are not ‘statistical neighbours’. Better comparisons may be made with countries with similar socio-economic / cultural dimensions.

Many children will grow up with the negative family factors identified by UNICEF (2007) and OECD (2009) but it doesn’t necessarily mean that their relationship with their parents is poor, or that they will exhibit behaviour issues. This therefore suggests that there must be either other ‘risk factors’ which are required for the development of behaviour issues, or ‘protective factors’ to prevent the formation of poor behaviour – both of which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Given that UNICEF (2007), OECD (2009) and Layard and Dunn (2009) do not give an insight into whether parenting has declined how can researchers measure if this has occurred? Little research appears to exist to quantify any changes and one must therefore turn to research and statistics which may give an insight into what might be classed as the ‘outcomes’ of parenting i.e. indicators that parents have some influence upon. Such indicators could include educational achievement, exclusion rates and crime figures. Evidence suggests that educational standards are rising (Layard & Dunn, 2009), school exclusion rates are declining (Department

for Children, Schools and Families, 2009b) and crime is reducing (Home Office, 2007); one could therefore read into such statistics that parenting is improving rather than declining, as these statistics suggest that outcomes for children are improving. Clearly this would be erroneous as there are other factors which influence these statistics other than parents e.g. improvements to the education system, and measures to reduce exclusions and improve pupil behaviour. In addition, it has been shown that peer pressures can have a large influence on children's behaviour (Bandura, 1969).

One can therefore not draw the conclusion made by Anderson (2007) that there has been a decline in family life. The 'Blair model' that most families find the raising of children difficult and that there are very few families who are 'dysfunctional' is more likely than there being a general dysfunction of the family system. His contention is supported by evidence from the Department for Schools, Children and Families (2009c) who estimated that there were only fifty-six-thousand families with significant '*multiple problems*', although in 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government was quoting the figure as one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand (Casey, 2012). For families there are a number of 'risk factors' which have been evidenced to lead to the development of behaviour issues – be these at the lower levels that this research deals with, or those children exhibiting anti-social behaviour / conduct disorders, and these will be examined in the next section of this thesis.

## Risk factors associated with the development of poor behaviour

In common with '*real world research*', attention now turns to causation, but as is well documented, finding '*constant conjunction*' in a social real world context is virtually impossible (Robson, 2002). Before commencing this section clarification is needed on what the '*problem*' is for which causal links are sought. What this section aims to identify are the risk factors, referred to as '*personal circumstances*' by Patterson (1982) and '*family characteristics*' by Webster-Stratton (1998), which can be associated with the development of behaviour issues in children ('*the problem*'). What researchers have found is that there are a number of 'risk factors' that can be evidenced to link to the possible development of such issues (Patterson, 1982; Gibbs *et al*; 2003; NICE 2005a; Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006; Webster-Stratton, 1990, 1998). These risk factors would still not fall within Robson's '*constant conjuncture*', as having one or more risk factors does not necessarily lead to problem behaviour, as will be discussed later when 'protective factors' are examined.

Patterson (1982) examined the personal circumstances (risk factors) that lead to the causation of behaviour issues. He showed the inter-relationship between personal circumstances, which he referred to as '*crises*', and consistency of family management practices, which can lead to the development of an anti-social child. He identified five main risk factor groups ('*crises*'): illness, poverty and unemployment; marital conflict, divorce and broken home; parents overly committed to work etc (*sic*); psychiatric disturbance e.g. depression; and substance abuse. He states that these '*crises*' lead to parents not implementing family management

practices such as house rules, monitoring the children, administering consequences and undertaking problem solving resolution. Both Patterson (1982) and Smith (1996) point out that this can be a two way process i.e. poor child behaviour can lead to the development of poor family management practices.

In addition to the factors highlighted by Patterson (1982), other factors have been highlighted in subsequent studies (Gibbs *et al.*, 2003; NICE, 2005a and 2005b; Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006; Webster-Stratton, 1990; 1998; Farrington, Lambert and West, 1998). NICE (2005b) breakdown the risk factors for the development of conduct disorders into three groups:

**Environmental factors:** social disadvantage, homelessness, low socio-economic status, poverty, overcrowding and social isolation.

**Family risk factors:** marital breakdown, substance abuse, criminal activities and “*abusive and injurious parenting practices*”.

**Child risk factors:** children with ‘*difficult temperaments*’, brain damage, epilepsy, chronic illness or cognitive difficulties.

Farrington, Lambert and West (1998), having acknowledged harsh discipline as being a major contribution to the development of ‘*delinquent behaviour*’, also identified high criticism, low warmth, low involvement and low encouragement as major risk factors in the formation of such behaviour. Webster-Stratton (1998) divides the risk factors into two groups, the family characteristics and the ineffective discipline approaches. Within family characteristics she includes the risk factors of low income, on-going depression, criminal activity, substance abuse, high levels of stress, single-parent status, low education levels and psychiatric illness. She



identifies the ineffective discipline methods as those which are inconsistent, erratic, physically abusive, highly critical and lacking in warmth.

Taking into account the research of Patterson (1982), Gibbs *et al.* (2003), NICE (2005a), Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006), Webster-Stratton (1990; 1998), and Farrington, Lambert and West (1998), the main risk factors for the development of poor behaviour can be grouped together as: low income environment, parental-relationship breakdown, low parental involvement and parental mental health (including addictions). These are the areas that Webster-Stratton (1998) refers to as the 'family characteristics'. As this research is primarily based on parenting, it has been decided not to examine the 'child risk factors' identified by NICE (2005b). It is acknowledged that for some children they will have difficulty controlling their behaviour due to biological / medical reasons. The evidence is quite clear, there are a number of key risk factors for the development of behaviour issues. Some of these factors are also linked, for example in the description of characteristics of poverty put forward by Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) they show that families with low income are more likely to suffer from relationship breakdowns and mental health issues; Webster-Stratton (1998) quotes Wahler (1980) who described parents in low income households as being '*multiply entrapped*'.

### **Protective factors**

The risk factors identified in the previous sections do not necessarily lead to the development of child behavioural issues, i.e. not all parents with low income or

mental health issues will have children with behaviour issues; as Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) summarises:

“Ensuring that a child brought up experiencing warmth, love and encouragement within safe boundaries is far harder for parents who live in the stressful conditions found in poor neighbourhoods. Children raised in poverty do less well than children raised in more favourable circumstances on a range of measures of attainment and quality of life. Yet, if the emotional quality of a child's upbringing is good, then the evidence is clear that children can succeed despite starting in less favourable conditions.”

(p1)

There must therefore be other factors at play that lead to the development of poor behaviour. Webster-Stratton (1990) in examining the key stressors leading to the breakdown of the parent-child relationship identified that the risk factors were mediated by the psychological characteristics of the parent, the level of support they receive from family and friends, and their gender (i.e. they are less likely to have difficulties if they are male). Webster-Stratton (1990) calls for further research into this area as she identified that these three factors overlap and may work ‘*synergistically*’ with one another. She gives the example that being a single parent is linked to the lack of a support group, may be linked to poverty and associated housing issues, which in turn can lead to depression. Tizzard (2009) cites Rutter (1988) who believed that there were, ‘*...endless interactions of internal and external factors...*’ leading to the development of poor behaviour. Casey (2012) uses the term ‘*problem saturated*’ to describe such families.

Despite some parents having to cope with some difficult situations, what Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown (2004) refer to as ‘*unpropitious circumstances*’, they contend that the use of the term ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parents is unhelpful as they

believe that the great majority of parents do their best for their children – even with risk factors. As Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) stated in the earlier quote, it is the '*emotional quality of a child's upbringing*' that they identify as the most significant protective factor. The message for staff in education is not necessarily to target parents with these risk factors to receive parenting classes, as many parents will be coping well, instead schools should be monitoring the outcomes for children whose parents have these risk factors and target support and intervention as appropriate. This support may be by delivering a parenting programme to the family and / or supporting the family to alleviate the risk factors as part of universal or targeted service provision.

## The development of support for families

The periods of childhood and adolescences were not seen as distinct periods in their own rights before the industrial revolution (Locke, 1690). Consequently children were often mistreated, especially during the Victorian period as they were seen as an economical source of labour for the emerging factories. This can be contrasted with the situation today with legislation to protect children from harm (Department of Health, 1989; Department for Education and Skills, 2004a).

### **Legislative framework for supporting families**

Legislation in the mid to late nineteenth century started to give children protection in their own rights, although it was not until after the Second World War that the pace of reforms around young people began to move quickly. In 1948 family life was enshrined in the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1998). Although the declaration offered some protection to children, there were only

two of the thirty articles which made reference specifically to children; article 25 gave children an entitlement to special care and assistance and article 26 the right to education (free at the 'elementary stage'). There was nothing in these rights which gave protection to children from abuse by parents or outlined the level of care and parenting that they should be entitled to.

In the 1960s and 70s debate began to be held into the role of the family within society. In the UK interest in parenting from central government increased following the statement by Keith Joseph (Secretary of State for Health) in 1974 referring to the '*cycle of deprivation and despair*' (Pugh, De'Ath & Smith, 1994). In his speech Joseph raised the concern that personal, social and emotional problems persisted from generation to generation. Despite Joseph's concerns in the mid 70s, further children's rights were not legislated for until much later as a consequence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Many of these rights addressed the need to protect children from abuse and outlined a level of care, although at a state rather than individual parent level. Articles 18, 19 and 24 categorically call upon nation states to put in place support for parents to ensure the effective parenting of children. The Children Act 1989 (Department of Health, 1989) enshrined these rights in to UK law by putting a responsibility on local authorities to promote the upbringing of children identified as '*at need*' by providing the support and services which those families might require. The Children Act 1989 was further reinforced through the Green Paper Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and Every Child Matters: next steps (Department for Education

and Skills, 2004b). Much of the detail in these Green Papers was enacted into law through the Children Act 2004 (Department for Education and Skills, 2004a).

As can be seen, the Labour government of 1997 – 2010 gave parenting a high priority during its three terms in office (Bell, 2005). Bell (2005) identifies three political agendas that were influential in the development of Labour policy towards families. Firstly, the importance of stable families, as ‘good parenting’ was seen as a ‘solution’ to a range of social problems. Secondly, support should be delivered through an inter-agency approach. And thirdly, services should be delivered as community-based projects. In addition to the legislation enacted by Parliament, the Labour government showed its commitment to supporting families in a number of policy papers. Following on from its green papers on Every Child Matters the Department for Education and Skills published Every Parent Matters (Department for Education and Skills, 2007). This document for the first time set out the government’s plans for supporting parents in one document. This was built on further through the document ‘Support for All: the Families and Relationships Green Paper’ (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009e). One of the last Labour government measures to support families was the ‘Think Families’ initiative (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009c) which aimed to support the whole family instead of just the child, through amongst other programmes, Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009d). The Labour government’s support to children and families was not only shown through policy documents but also the Sure Start initiative targeting support

at the early years which cost £1.8 billion from 1998 – 2006 (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006).

The rather defeatist stance stated by Blair (2007) that some families do not '*respond to more investment*' calls into question the funding that the Labour government put into such families. This included the commitment to investing £35.5 million into FIPs (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009d). Government policy in the latter stages of the Labour government may suggest that there was a realisation that there are, "*only a small number of highly dysfunctional families*" that do not "*respond to more investment*" (Blair, 2007). The 'Think Families' initiative (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009c) identified just fifty-six thousand such families and proposed a more 'joined-up' approach to solving their problems.

The election of the Coalition Government in 2010 saw a new approach to tackling the perceived ills of society, through what David Cameron has coined 'the Big Society':

"We want to give citizens, Communities, and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve problems they face and build the Britain they want. We want society – the families, networks, neighbourhoods and communities that form the fabric of so much of our everyday lives – to be bigger and stronger than ever before. Only when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all."  
(Cameron, 2011)

What we may therefore be witnessing is a move away from the legislative approach to supporting parents, as undertaken by the Labour government, and a move to a

society where government encourages voluntary organisations and individuals to support troubled families. The recent literature highlights two aspects of the Coalition Government's policy towards supporting families; firstly, a 'firm' approach to what the government refers to as 'troubled families'. The Head of the Troubled Families team at the Department for Communities and Local Government states that there are 120,000 such families in the UK and that such families need a new approach to dealing with their issues:

"What that new approach requires in my view was a firm grip on the issue both nationally and locally; what was also required was a sense of purpose and of pace. And you can't get away from it, purpose, pace, commitment and grip also means you need money."

(Casey, 2012)

Eric Pickles (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) identified one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand 'troubled families':

"These folks are troubled: They're troubling themselves, they're troubling their neighbourhood. We need to do something about it."

(Pickles, 2012)

Secondly, the government is showing a desire to improve parenting by providing support to all families, rather than just to those that need to be '*gripped*'. As part of this universal approach, the government plans to trial the use of parenting programmes for all parents (which they refer to as 'Can Parent'), initially in three areas of the country, as stated by the Children's Minister, Sarah Teather in 2012:

"The overwhelming evidence, from all experts, is that a child's development in the first five years of their life is the single biggest factor influencing their future life chances, health and educational attainment. Armed with this evidence, it is the Government's moral and social duty to make sure we support all parents at this critical time...I want to get rid of the stigma attached to asking for help...All parents should know it's ok to ask for extra support...just as most do when they attend ante-natal classes."

(Department for Education, 2012)

## **The growth of parenting programmes**

Parenting programmes have their origins in the USA during the 1970s with three of the original programmes being the 'Living with Children' programme (Oregon Social Learning Centre) (Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe, 2004); and STEP (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting developed by Dinkmeyer and McKay) and Parenting Effectiveness Training (PET) both cited by Smith and Pugh (1996). Initially such initiatives were referred to as 'parent training' programmes (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006). Pugh, De'Ath and Smith (1994) reported on a sizeable expansion of programmes between 1984 and 1994 in the UK, although they don't hypothesise why this might be the case. Over the last decade the use of parenting programmes has become more common in the UK and the Labour government was committed to their use (Cabinet Office, 2006; Department of Health, 2004; Department for Education and Skills, 2004b). In 2012 the Coalition Government announced a trial of a universal population programme entitled 'Can Parent' (Department for Education, 2012).

As can be seen, there is a huge contrast from the position reflected by Locke (1690), where children were seen as 'mini adults', to the one now where outcomes for children are specified through targets. This major change seems to have commenced in the 1970s when family life became a political issue – coinciding with the development of parenting programmes in America at that time. This commitment to supporting and developing family life has continued under the tenure of the Coalition Government.



## Who attends parenting programmes?

Smith (1996) identified three groups of parents who attend parenting programmes:

“...those who want to do their best for their children, who want to be *good enough* parents, or who want to be affirmed in their parenting style; secondly, parents whose children exhibit behaviour problems of varying severity; and thirdly, parents who have multiple problems, including depression and extremely low self-esteem.” (p114)

Another group to factor in are those parents ‘compelled’ to attend through court orders. This group would not have existed when Smith was writing, as at that point there was not the option for courts to compel parents to attend. The three groups identified by Smith (1996), and parents compelled to attend, could come together in what Bell (2005) refers to as a ‘*universal programme*’, ‘*open access programme*’ or ‘*community-based programme*’ i.e. a programme open for all parents to attend. Bell (2005) raised the question of whether all the parents’ needs could be met in a ‘universal programme’. She found no evidence of parents dropping out because of the mixing of groups, and some evidence that parents, who attended to merely assert they were doing a ‘good enough’ job, found the course useful. Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2004) identified that there were benefits for parents of children who fall within the ‘normal range’ of behaviour working alongside parents of children with conduct disorders (although they do not expand upon this point).

The majority of parents attending parenting programmes are women (Rylands, 1995; NICE, 2005b), of which there is a similar split between those married and those classing themselves as ‘single’. In Bell (2005) six cohorts of parenting programmes were examined of which only six fathers attended, and then ‘*spasmodically*’. She reflected that fathers may feel uncomfortable meeting alongside groups of women and may find talk-based initiatives more difficult to

associate with. Bell (2005) cites Ghate, Shaw and Hazel (2000) who concluded that fathers prefer more active and practical focused groups. Rylands (1995) states that the needs of fathers do not appear to be met in the current forms of parenting programmes, and the lack of men attending programmes may support this contention. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) cite Ghate, Shaw and Hazel (2000) who suggest that mothers and fathers might want different things from family support services. Their research also states that many services are designed with mothers in mind.

Bayley, Wallace and Choudhry (2009) undertook research to consider the barriers and best practice in engaging fathers in parenting programmes. They concluded that there were five key barriers to fathers participating in parenting programmes:

- Lack of awareness regarding services and service values
- Competing work commitments
- Mother-orientated service environment
- Lack of organisational support
- Relevance, content and structure of programmes

In identifying 'best practice' Bayley, Wallace and Choudhry (2009) were able to formulate suggestions on how to breakdown the above barriers, but did not identify research to show the impact on attendance by fathers attending programmes once these measures had been taken.

In evaluations parents have said that they would have appreciated their partner being on the course with them (Grimshaw and McGuire, 1998). This desire to have the partner there is also backed-up by evidence that suggests that it is not only

‘desirable’ but also important if the parenting programme is to have a lasting impact on the family, especially if the programme is built on the social learning theory, such as the Incredible Years (Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown, 2004; Webster-Stratton, 1985). Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) cite Coplin and Houts (1991) who found that the father’s attendance on a course with the mother may “*enhance maintenance*” and “*generalization of parent training effects*”. They are unclear if this is as a consequence of an improved father-child relationship, increased consistency in dealing with behaviours from both parents, or by enhancing emotional support for the partner.

Statistics concerning the ethnic split of groups attending parenting programmes show that the majority of the women who attend programmes are white (NICE, 2005b). It has not been possible to find any evidence in published literature to suggest why ethnic groups are not accessing the programmes but there are very few programmes developed specifically for ethnic groups – most are either translated into other languages, adapted to try and meet their needs but only occasionally are culturally specific e.g. the Effective Black Parenting Programme used widely in the USA (Barlow, Shaw and Stewart-Brown, 2004).

NICE (2005b) show that parents of children with conduct disorders on parenting programmes are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, although in an Australian study of the universal programme, ‘Triple-P’, it was found that better educated parents were more likely to attend parenting programmes (Sanders *et al.*, 2006). Caution needs to be exercised in reading too much into the

findings from Sanders *et al.* (2006) in relation to this research; their programme is very different to many programmes as the first level of their scheme is an information campaign aimed at the whole population; therefore more parents have access to the materials. It has not been possible to locate data to suggest the socio-economic dynamics of participants attending programmes in the UK, especially when delivered to parents of 'normal-range' behaviour children.

### **Compulsory attendance on parenting programmes**

Whilst the tone of much of the previous Labour government's documentation around supporting parenting talked in terms of '*working with*' parents, in some instances attendance at parenting programmes may be made compulsory. Direction to attend a parenting programme can be ordered through a number of Acts of Parliament including the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Police and Justice Bill 2006. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 gave schools the power to issue parenting contracts to request parents to attend parenting programmes in order to improve the child's behaviour or attendance at school. A year after the implementation of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) found little evidence of schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) directing parents to attend programmes through these measures. They identify concern from LEAs that they would not be able to fulfil demand if there was a dramatic increase in any type of referral. Most importantly, from a school perspective, the Education and Inspection Act 2006 gave LEAs and schools the power to seek parenting orders in cases of 'serious misbehaviour', rather than having to wait for the trigger of exclusion before seeking an order. Hallam, Rogers

and Shaw (2004) state that parents who are compelled to attend programmes by the court can integrate well into mixed groups as long as individual time is spent with the facilitator before the start of the programme in order for them to vent some of their anger and negative feelings.

Evidence would therefore suggest that programmes are generally attended by white women, without their partners, of these a number will have attended to affirm that they are parenting 'correctly', whilst others will be in attendance due to concerns about their child's behaviour. The research from Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) would also suggest that there may be a small percentage of parents attending programmes who will have been compelled to attend through court orders. It is unclear what the socio-economic split of groups is in the UK. It has also not been possible to identify any literature stating the percentage of parents whose children fall within the 'normal-range' of behaviour attending parenting programmes, or specifics of this group e.g. gender and socio-economic dimensions. This is clearly an area that would benefit from further research.

## Are parenting programmes effective?

When examining the literature concerning the effectiveness of parenting programmes one needs to be mindful of what it is that is being evaluated, as Smith and Pugh (1996) illustrate:

"What do we mean by effectiveness... and for whom: parents or children? What criteria might be used to decide whether or not such a programme works? And, given the wide variety of parent education programmes with different aims, methods, content and approaches,

and the range of variables present in parents' lives, is it possible to give a simple answer..."

(p30)

The above quote clearly shows the complexity of simply asking the question 'are parenting programmes effective'. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) also highlight this complexity by examining the multitude of possibilities if the researcher were to measure effectiveness in terms of 'outcomes'. They define 'outcome' as:

"...something that is thought to have come about *as a result of* something else. The term implies a direction of influence (a causal relationship), which in turn implies a temporal relationship (a sequential element)." (p21)

They then go on to state that 'outcomes' can cover a vast range of 'elements', including; state of mind, attitudes, beliefs and bodies of knowledge; behaviours, skills and competencies; state of health or well-being; relationships, community engagement and social functioning; and the ability or willingness to access services. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) contend that evaluations of programmes have typically examined the extent to which negative outcomes have diminished and / or positive factors have increased. They argue that with parenting programmes this "*sets the bar too high*" as they claim that their list of elements:

"...are things that typically develop slowly and incrementally over a period of time; and...they are subject to an almost infinite complexity of influences." (p22)

Consequently, they state some researchers avoid the term 'outcome', preferring to use 'factor' or 'constructs', although they acknowledge these terms can be 'unwieldy' and opt themselves to use 'outcome'.

Answering the question "are parenting programmes effective" is therefore going to be difficult. Added to this is the fact that the majority of research into parenting

programmes concentrates on the impact and effectiveness for families who access programmes as part of targeted services, often in clinical settings. In the area of universal services, especially mainstream school provision, there is limited evidence into the impact of programmes; it is effectiveness in this area that this thesis seeks to understand. The research into programmes delivered by targeted services has not been dismissed, primarily because of limited research into universal programmes, and a belief that some of the evidence will be transferable to the mainstream setting; a similar conclusion was reached by Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004). There are though two reports that have a strong link to this thesis title i.e. programmes undertaken in schools and aimed at universal populations; these are Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) and Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004). In addition research is also presented from other studies, both in non-school universal settings (Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach, 2002; Bell, 2005; Hiscock, 2008; Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown, 2004) and clinical settings (Heriot, Evans and Foster, 2007; Henderson and Sargent, 2005; Jones *et al.*, 2007). Research from a meta-analytical study (NICE 2005b) and a meta-ethnographical study (Kane, Wood and Barlow, 2007) are also presented within the following literature review.

### **School based, universal population studies**

The report by Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and led by Stephen Scott, who is a leading academic in the field of parenting programmes. A key focus of their project was to examine the impact of a universal programme when delivered to families from minority ethnic backgrounds. The programme they examined was the Primary Age Learning Study

(PALS) which the study implies was developed by the researchers themselves, having adapted this from the Supporting Parents on Kids' Education in School programme (SPOKES) (which Stephen Scott was also involved in developing). Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) undertook a randomised controlled trial (RCT) of the Incredible Years programme combined with a reading recovery programme as a preventative trial. The parenting programme was delivered to parents whilst the children received only the reading element. The study centred on four primary schools in an area of high deprivation in inner-city London. The children were aged five and six years of age, and as well as being a poor area of London it was also '*ethnically diverse*'. Classes of children, rather than individual children were selected to create the RCT; although within this they targeted half the places to children who showed a degree of anti-social behaviour through their screening measures. The aim of the research was to elicit what makes parenting programmes work in disadvantaged areas when aimed at parents of children in the middle years. They do not specify what they class as the 'middle years', but the fact they selected children in Reception and Year One classes points to children within the infant school phase. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) state there have been numerous trials undertaken into what they refer to as "*interventions in increasing maternal sensitivity*" (i.e. parenting programmes) when undertaken with very young children, but very few examine effectiveness when delivered to parents of children in the 'middle years'. They claim that more sensitive measures have been developed that now allow researchers to examine if such programmes have an impact on children in 'middle childhood'. It was therefore with this group of children that their research sought to find further understanding.



Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) state that previous 'preventative trials' had mixed success compared to 'treatment trials', but reached the conclusion that their preventative programme had changed parenting in a number of ways. There was increased sensitive responding to the child's signals and needs, and parents were more involved with their children. To the researchers' surprise the amount of directions given by parents did not decrease and parents reported that giving praise to their children did not increase. In terms of outcomes for children the authors report that pupils showed an improved ability to concentrate; one must remember that this programme included the '*grafting on*' of a reading recovery programme – it may be that this element led to the improvement in concentration.

In Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) there was limited evidence that child behaviour improved, despite this being the principal aim, the screening measures did not detect a decrease in anti-social behaviours, although questionnaires and interviews with parents did show an improvement in child behaviour. Reflecting upon this Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) believe that there could be a number of factors at play leading to this result, including the fact that the measurement instruments were not sensitive enough. They used Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire combined with reading tests, semi-structured interviews and direct observation as measures. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) also state that the intervention may not have been delivered in a skilled enough way. They also reflect that participants on the course were drawn from the universal population, and therefore most of the children had no anti-social behaviour at the beginning of the programme, and those that did fell within the normal-range (although as already

stated, they selected half of the children due to anti-social behaviour indicators). Consequently, they believe there was little room for improvement from the offset. It is also possible that the parents may have under reported negative behaviours at the beginning of the programme and then became aware of such behaviours through the course and reported more at the end. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) also state that the intervention may not have been long enough, especially for the reading element given that there was a significant non-attendance rate on the course by parents (only 53% of parents attended between five and eighteen sessions,  $n = 31$ ).

The research of Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) is of high interest to this research as it targets a universal population group and was based in a school setting. Despite some similarities with the fieldwork in this thesis, caution needs to be shown in drawing the conclusion that parenting programmes delivered in areas of high deprivation in schools will impact positively in all situations. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) reached the conclusion that, "*targeting families by the area they live in is an inefficient way to meet need...*" A key aspect of their work, which is not greatly highlighted, was the ethnic diversity. Of the fifty-eight parents who attended their programmes, Africans represented 39.6% ( $n = 23$ ), African-Caribbean 20.6% ( $n = 12$ ), White-British 25.8% ( $n = 15$ ), and other 13.7% ( $n = 8$ ). As the African group represented the largest group is there something within this African community that could be associated with different 'protective factors'? The picture presented of this group by Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) suggests that this may be the case:

"...many of the Africans, though mostly having come to this country within the last ten years, had university degrees or were studying for

accountancy or law qualifications; they reported being part of a cohesive community who could draw on each other for support, and who were well structured, with the vast majority having strong (Christian) beliefs and attending church each week, where community relationships were further strengthened. The school teachers reported these parents taking a keen interest in their children, turning up to school meetings etc.” (p45)

One also needs to be mindful that although classed as ‘universal’ the project targeted half of the places at parents whose children had been screened as having anti-social behaviour. Scott, O’Connor and Futh (2006) conclude that universal programmes may not be cost effective, a finding collaborated by Sanders and Moorawska (2006). Scott, O’Connor and Futh (2006) also identifies the work of Weisz, Donenberg and Han (1995) which showed that the, “*evaluation of outcomes for usual services delivered in ‘real-life’ clinics show little if any effect*”.

Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) were commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills to report on the effectiveness of parenting programmes in improving behaviour and school attendance and to make recommendations. For their research they contacted all local education authorities (LEAs) (as they were then referred to) and one hundred and thirty-four responded (89%), with twenty-three parenting programmes being selected for more detailed investigation. Their finding was that there was evidence to show that behaviour and attendance at school did improve following the parents’ completion of a course, although they accept that the data was limited. What they do go on to state is that if the behaviour in school is related to ‘*school issues*’ e.g. bullying or poor relationship with some teachers, then behaviour continues to be of concern. The majority of parents interviewed, or who completed questionnaires, stated that there was not a concern

about school behaviour at the start of the programme. Of the seventy-three parents completing the post-programme questionnaire, 83% stated that the programme had been successful at improving the child's behaviour at home. Few parents reported an improvement in the child's concentration or learning.

In terms of pupil attendance, Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) were interested in tracking if improvement took place, as a number of parents were referred to courses through compulsory orders instigated by the Education Welfare Services (which oversee attendance issues in each authority). They found that for the twelve children identified with attendance issues their attendance increased from 81% to 84% in the spring term 2004, a figure they claim to be '*statistically significant*'. They also stated that attendance was more likely to improve if the child was less than eleven years of age. Caution needs to be exercised in analysis of this data, as it was a small research sample ( $n=12$ ) over a short period of time (one year).

### **Non school-based universal population studies**

Another study of delivery of a 'universal programme', although in this case not a school based initiative, is Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach (2002) who undertook research in Dundee, Scotland. Their study examined the effectiveness of a programme, also coincidentally called PALS, but in this case the acronym refers to Parents Altogether Lending Support. The programme studied seventy-five parents and their children over an eighteen month period and not only examined the outcomes for the families but also the implementation and delivery of the initiative. The children in the project were aged between eight months and twenty-three years

old (the paper does not state the mean age or distribution pattern of ages). Equally the research is vague on the selection process and the levels of behaviour exhibited by the children before the commencement of the programme, although they do refer to it as an 'open access programme'. The PALS programme (Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach, 2002) was shown to be successful in assisting parents to change their own behaviour through, for example, increasing their patience, controlling their voice and adopting a more positive attitude with their child. Parents were asked to reflect on the benefits of the course; only 13% were able to point to an improvement in their child's behaviour, with the majority focussing on the shift in their own behaviour. Other successes, not connected to improvements in the child's behaviour, included opportunities to meet other parents in their community and share experiences of parenting, and on completion of the course some parents went on to further learning. Although these successes were not connected directly to child behaviour they could have long term advantages by establishing support systems for the parent(s) and improving their economic situation. Webster-Stratton (1990) found that such support systems may act as a 'protective factor' for children.

Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2004) undertook a mixed qualitative and quantitative study of a parenting programme when delivered to parents of children falling within the 'normal-range' of behaviour in a general practice community base. The researchers invited all parents of children aged between two and eight years of age registered at three GP surgeries in Oxford to complete the Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) (Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown, 2004 cite Eyberg & Ross, 1978). All were invited to attend a parenting programme if their

child's ECBI score fell above the mean i.e. in the 'worst' half of distribution. A quarter of those who joined the programme had scores that fell within the 'clinical-range' for behaviour whilst the remaining three-quarters fell within the 'normal-range'. A control group was also established. As well as the use of the ECBI the researchers undertook interviews and open-ended questionnaires with the group leaders and parents to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2004) concluded that the quantitative data showed that the Webster-Stratton Parenting programme (Parents and Children's Series programme) is useful for parents of 'normal-range' children as well as for parents of children whose behaviour is in the clinical range. They found three tiers of positive benefits from the course:

"First, building a less controlling and more rewarding relationship with the child. This was achieved mainly by the use of the play and praise. Second, parenting competence was enhanced by three factors: having a structure to underpin decisions and strategies; acquiring and practising practical skills such as praise, rewards, star charts and time-out; and gaining coping skills, feeling more confident and less stressed. The third level was increasing support for parents, during the course itself from leaders and other participants, after the course from other parents." (p61)

In another study, Bell (2005) followed twelve cohorts who received the Webster-Stratton programme when undertaken alongside the Dinosaur School as a community-based initiative involving a number of agencies (the specific Webster-Stratton programme is not identified). The focus of her study was to assess the effectiveness of running programmes in the community as universal programmes and the interaction between different practitioners when working as an inter-agency team. The programmes were delivered in a small North of England city over a two

year period; Bell (2005) describes the areas where the programmes were delivered as '*mainly working-class*' and '*predominantly white*'. Twenty-seven children participated in the project, aged between four and eleven years of age, although half were aged less than five years old. Outcomes for children and parents were not identified as an aim of her research; and although she undertook the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires, the Adult Well-Being, and Parenting Daily Hassles scales with participants and practitioners before commencement, she did not repeat these post-test. The research was therefore highly qualitative. Bell (2005) concluded that by being community-based the attendance by parents was '*normalised*', as did offering it as an evening-class. She also found that the preparation of a meal as part of the course was effective as it allowed facilitators to model behaviour with the children (who were present for this element), and to observe the interaction between parent and child. She found that inter-agency working was effective. Bell (2005) also states that the Dinosaur Club helps children to learn strategies to manage their feelings and to sustain friendships as well as how to control their anger; Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) also stated that when the Dinosaur Club is run alongside the adult programme "*educational outcomes appeared stronger*". Despite these 'operational' successes Bell (2005) does not outline the benefits for either parent or child in improving relationships or child behaviour.

Hiscock *et al.* (2008) was a study by Australian researchers into what they refer to as a 'universal parenting programme' to prevent early childhood behavioural problems. The programme used is not identified but the paper implies it was an 'in-

house' programme. The programme was offered to mothers of eight-month olds in Melbourne from low, middle and high socio-economic status areas of the city. Parents were given three sessions, delivered by health visitors over a fifteen month period. The researchers were able to show only 'modest' reductions in parenting risk factors including harsh parental discipline and inappropriate development expectations, with no significant impact on externalising behaviour problems in the children or on maternal mental health. Although of interest to this study there are limitations to the research from Hiscock *et al.* (2008) as it was undertaken in Australia with children initially aged eight months old and within a clinical setting. In addition the structure it followed does not fit with the 'traditional' models of parenting programmes presented in this thesis. Parents participated in just three sessions, the first session being the reading of four handouts on developmental behaviours. Parents were then invited to two hour long group sessions when the child was twelve months and eighteen months of age.

### **Clinical studies with parents of conduct disorder children**

Although there is a paucity of research into the effectiveness of parenting programmes at universal population level, there is a wealth of literature pointing to the success of programmes when undertaken with families of children with conduct disorders. It has been shown that such programmes have a stronger efficacy in comparison to drug treatment and individual psychotherapy for the treatment of children with 'mental health problems' (Hiscock *et al.*, 2008). Programmes can also be effective at reducing the symptoms of ADHD (Heriot, Evans and Foster, 2007). Also when used with adoptive parents of children with behavioural issues, the Incredible Years Basic programme has been shown to be effective in reducing



parental stress and significantly reduced children's levels of hyper-activity, conduct disorder and behavioural difficulties (Henderson and Sargent, 2005). Success with conduct disorder children is also supported by Jones *et al.* (2007) who showed improvements in parent reported levels of child inattention and hyperactivity following inclusion on the Incredible Years Basic Programme, a finding supported by NICE (2005b). Although NICE (2005b) in their meta-analysis study identified success in the home when programmes were undertaken with parents of children with conduct disorder, the evidence was not as conclusive for improvements in oppositional behaviour at school with peers.

Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007) employed a meta-ethnographic method to examine literature pertaining to parents' perceptions of parenting programmes. They claim that previous systematic reviews had been based on RCTs undertaken in clinical settings. They cite Britten *et al.* (2003) and Campbell *et al.* (2003) who showed that meta-ethnographical studies can give new insights that were not evident in the individual papers. Their study identified four research programmes that met their criteria in order to build a line-of-argument synthesis (Spitzer *et al.*, 1991; Kilgour & Fleming, 2000; Barlow and Stewart Brown, 2001; Stewart-Brown *et al.*, 2004). A summary of these four papers is presented in table 2.3.

<b>Authors</b>	<b>Setting and delivery</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Sample number</b>	<b>Theoretical perspective</b>
Spitzer <i>et al.</i> , 1991	Individual therapist consultations	Webster Stratton Incredible Years	7 families	Grounded theory
Kilgour & Fleming, 2000	Health visitor group delivery	Webster Stratton Incredible Years	11 mothers	Critical social science
Barlow & Stewart Brown, 2001	School based but delivered by Family Links facilitators	Family Links	11 parents	Grounded theory
Stewart-Brown <i>et al.</i> , 2004	Health visitors in general practice	Webster Stratton Incredible Years	26 parents in parenting group and 15 parents in a control group	Not specified

**Table 2.3: Research examined by Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007)**

The lines-of-argument synthesis put forward by Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007) was that parenting programmes allow parents to:

- acquire knowledge, skills and understanding, together with feelings of acceptance and support from other parents in the parenting group, enabling parents to regain control and feel more able to cope.
- This led to a reduction in
  - feelings of guilt and social isolation; and
  - increased empathy with the children and confidence in dealing with their behaviour.

Despite the wealth of research highlighting the success of programmes, Webster-Stratton (1998) cites Wahler (1980) and Dumas and Wahler (1983) who identify research pointing to less positive results when parenting programmes are

undertaken with parents on low-incomes. No other research has been found to reinforce this assertion and therefore more research is required before any significance can be read into this report.

## **Summary**

The literature review therefore suggests there is little quantifiable evidence to conclude that parenting programmes are effective in universal population samples for children with 'normal-range' behaviours, although there is some qualitative evidence to show success. Clear impact has been evidenced when parenting programmes are undertaken with parents of children with conduct disorders (Hiscock *et al.*, 2008; Heriot, Evans and Foster, 2007; Jones *et al.*, 2007; NICE, 2005b; Henderson and Sargent, 2005). One must remember that the origin of most of these programmes is from clinical settings to tackle these problems, and therefore this is what would be expected. It may be though that the programme being used with the specific universal population group is not the most effective for this population. The conclusion that Smith (1996) made, through a study of thirty-eight parenting programmes, was that it was 'horses for courses' i.e. different programmes deliver different outcomes. Smith (1996) identified Mellow Parenting as being successful for parents with severe parenting difficulties in a stressful context; the ABC of Behaviour and Managing Difficult Children programme for children with behaviour problems; and Parent-Link and Effective Parenting for those parents wishing to reflect on their parenting and to improve relationships. Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) also call for greater research into which programmes are the most effective for different types of parents e.g. single parents, step families and children

exhibiting different types of behaviour, as they claim there has been little research into this element.

## How is the effectiveness of a parenting programme measured?

Research into parenting programmes has been criticised for being over reliant upon qualitative studies (Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe, 2004) although Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007) argue to the contrary – that there has been an over reliance upon quantitative studies. Given that public finances are being spent on such programmes, it is important that they are measured to ensure they are a good use of taxpayers' money.

### **Improvements in the child-parent relationship**

Most parenting programmes include a built in assessment framework for the parent to outline improvements in the relationship with their child; clearly this is a highly qualitative set of data. These assessments allow facilitators to assess the impact of the programme from the questionnaires returned by parents. One must be careful how such findings are interpreted as it is to the advantage of the programme developers to have a high success rate. Additionally caution has to be exercised with reference to the use of the Incredible Years questionnaire to evaluate programmes, as this is a post-test questionnaire with no pre-test measurement to make comparisons with. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) claim that despite a high percentage of parental evaluations indicating a satisfaction with parenting programmes, few studies outline strong evidence to support the parents' contentions. One also needs to be careful when examining the responses from

some parents, as Webster-Stratton (1988) showed that mothers with depression, and / or mothers stressed due to 'marital problems', are less accurate in their judgement of their child's behaviour. Webster-Stratton (1988) found that such mothers were likely to perceive more deviant behaviour, whereas fathers' perceptions are relatively unaffected by personal issues.

### **Improvements in the child's behaviour**

Measurement of improvements in the child's behaviour can be undertaken through qualitative or quantitative measures. Qualitative data can be provided by the parent, for example through a parent questionnaire, which may ask specific questions about observed improvements by the parent of their child's behaviour. When quantitative tools are used this is normally in a pre-test, post-test approach, although rarely are control groups used, as criticised by Reading (2007). Such tools include clinical measures for quantifying the children's behaviour, and subsequent improvements in behaviour, including Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire, and Connors and Rutter's. NICE (2005b) also identifies the use of the Child Behaviour Checklist, Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory and the Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction System. Many parenting programmes were developed in clinical settings in order to 'treat' children with conduct disorders as a 'therapeutic intervention' in a medical paradigm (e.g. Incredible Years and Mellow Parenting), as a consequence such programmes are often evaluated using these clinical methods. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) found that such measures were not effective for measuring parenting programmes when delivered to universal population groups, probably due to many of these children not being within the clinical ranges that

these tools aim to measure, and therefore the tools not being sensitive enough. Given the aims of parenting programmes identified at the beginning of this chapter, and the diversity of possible outcomes stated by Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004), it may not be surprising that tools to measure child behaviour can be inconclusive. Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach (2002) argue that assessments are more 'robust' when several measures are used and give examples of behavioural observations, agency referral rates, staff ratings, psychological inventories and children's academic performance as other possible measures.

### **The measurement of parenting self-efficacy**

Bloomfield and Kendall (2007) state that a number of studies in the USA have used self-efficacy measures to identify the impact of a parenting programme. They outline the concept of self-efficacy as follows:

“According to Bandura's social learning theory, from which the concept of self-efficacy is derived, the acquisition and retention of behaviour is affected by the person's expectations that the action will result in anticipated benefits. People are thus motivated to attempt behaviour that they feel confident in performing.” (p488)

Bloomfield and Kendall (2007) developed their own instrument, entitled Tool to Measure Parenting Self-Efficacy (TOPSE), to measure self-efficacy as they stated that the effectiveness of a programme could be measured in how confident the parent was at the end of the course to implement the social learning. The tool was originally developed for use by health visitors and uses an 11-point Likert scale. Their assessment is not the first to examine self-efficacy but they claim the majority of those already published are from the USA and they were keen to ensure the

questionnaire used language relevant to the UK and assessed parenting within context.

### **Cost effectiveness**

Another measure used by some researchers is to quantify effectiveness of parenting programmes in terms of cost / savings to society (NICE 2005b; Edwards *et al.*, 2007; Scott *et al.*, 2001). In their meta-analysis NICE (2005b) found only two publications related to economic calculations, neither of which was from the UK, this lead the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) to calculate its own costing effectiveness through use of the 'quality-adjusted life-years' (QALY) measure, rather than using child behaviour indicators. QALY aims to put specific health states on a continuum between, for example, 0 (= death) and 1 (= perfect health), and are used to provide an indication of the benefits gained from a medical procedure in terms of quality of life and survival for the patient. In a clinical setting QALY might be used to assess the likely gains for a cancer patient between the options of radiation therapy in comparison to palliative care. NICE (2005b) concluded that with parenting programmes for an assumed improvement in the quality of life of 5% there would be an incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER) of £12,600 per QALY.

The potential cost to society of conduct disorders is illustrated by Scott *et al.* (2001) who showed that by the age of twenty-eight years individuals with conduct disorder had an increased cost to society ten times higher than those without, with a mean individual cost of £70,019. Edwards *et al.* (2007) concluded that given programmes' '*relatively low costs*' they showed good value for public money. The Respect

Programme (Cabinet Office, 2006) highlighted un-cited US research that has shown that the benefit of every \$1 spent on parenting programmes equated to a saving of \$4.25 from reductions in the cost of crime alone. Smith and Pugh (1996) noted a paucity of research into the cost effectiveness of programmes. Quite clearly in the intervening years this has been addressed, although a similar position still exists in the area of the cost effectiveness of programmes delivered in schools aimed at universal population samples

## **Summary**

Parenting programmes can therefore be evaluated in a number of ways, utilising both qualitative and quantitative measurement tools. A number of studies have followed the clinical measurement route, whereas others have been more reliant on qualitative measures. Others have tried to utilise both qualitative and quantitative data, such as Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006). As well as measuring outcomes for families, tools have been developed for measuring the self-efficacy, whilst others concentrate on the cost effectiveness of programmes.

## **What are the practical steps for ensuring a parenting programme is effective?**

Attention now moves to an examination of the key factors for ensuring effectiveness as identified in the literature review. Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach (2002) detail the implementation of the PALS programmes on seventeen occasions and discuss many of the issues concerned with the implementation of a programme. Their main conclusion was that the success of a programme is '*integrally linked*' to the process



by which it is established within the community. They use the cliché that the community must feel that they have '*ownership*' of the programme, with each new group adapting the programme to fit their needs. This would be contrary to the findings of NICE (2005b) and Lauth, Otte and Heubeck (2009) who stipulated that the most successful programmes rigorously followed the course manual written by the developer. Although not explicitly stated, there is an inference that Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach were involved in originally developing the PALS programme and therefore adaption would be easier.

Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach (2002) contend that undertaking parenting programmes on a school site can discourage parents to attend as they can feel unwelcome and intimidated. This finding is supported by Bell (2005) who felt that a neutral community base '*destigmatizes service delivery*', although Bell (2005) does acknowledge that where schools are involved the improvements parents make are more likely to be sustained. Whereas Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) state that if the intended aim is to improve educational outcomes then the delivery of the programme would be better held in the school, especially in the case of primary schools. They found that school staff were helpful to the facilitators and that issues around transport were negated. It also allowed for consistent approaches to behaviour management from school to home and improved home-school relationships.

Research shows that 'co-hosting' (more than one agency facilitating the delivery of the course) can be a concern as adult services supporting a parent's needs might

conflict with children's services supporting a child's needs (Bell, 2005). Bell (2005) also identified that parents were more likely to undertake a parenting programme if social care were not involved. This may have significant implications for the 'Think Families' initiative which aims to join-up child and adult services to support families (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009c).

Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) found that the top five 'perceived problems' in delivering programmes were providing crèche facilities, venue, funding, transport and recruiting parents. NICE (2005a) concludes that the 'practical steps' needed to provide a good programme include: home visits to parents, hold the groups in local community settings, provide transport, offer a crèche, undertake some sessions outside of working hours, reward parents for attendance with prizes or payment, telephone parents between sessions to check on progress, give encouragement, get parents to ring one another, send cards to parents who miss sessions, and encourage parents to bring their partner or friend. Moran, Ghate and van der Merwe (2004) concur with the points outlined by NICE (2005a), adding, investing persistent effort in the early stages of referral; pursuing non-attendees vigorously and persistently; warning families that services may be withdrawn if they miss sessions; and mandating high risk parents to attend. Bell (2005) also found offering the parent programme as an evening class was effective for 'normalising' delivery.

For a programme to be effective therefore the evidence would suggest that there should be an element of peer support built in with the facilitator aiming to ensure that the pre-requisites such as transport and crèche are in place and they should offer on-going support and encouragement to attend to the participants.

Contradictory research points to effectiveness of programmes both when programme manuals are rigorously adhered to and when the programme is adapted to the needs of the participants. Contradictions also exist from the literature review concerning the most effective location for the programmes to be delivered.

## The limitations of research into parenting programmes

In examining the background theory in this literature review limitations in the current body of knowledge of parenting programmes have become evident. Given that parenting programmes are a relative new phenomena (from approximately the 1970s), and therefore research into their effectiveness is recent, it is not surprising that there are these limitations.

As stated, the literature review has highlighted a lack of reports emanating from the UK. The NICE (2005a) study of forty-one RCTs showed that twenty-two were from the USA, twelve from Australia, two from Canada, one in Ireland and only four from the UK, this may not be surprising given that a number of programmes were developed in the USA and Australia.

Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) and Lauth, Otte and Heubeck (2009) also identify limitations to many of the evaluations undertaken on parenting programmes because they claim most are carried out by the developers of the programme and conducted in specialist university clinics. For example a great deal of research emanates from the School of Psychology at the University of Queensland, as this is the university where Professor Matt Sanders developed the 'Triple P' parenting programme. As a commercial enterprise the university therefore has a vested

interest in the analysis and promotion of its programme, as does the University of Washington which markets the Incredible Years programme developed by one of its professors, Carolyn Webster Stratton. The independence of their research therefore has to be questioned.

Reading (2007) claims that many of the evaluative studies of parenting programmes employ control groups which are then offered the programme following the research. Reading (2007) claims therefore the long term impact of programmes cannot be measured effectively – a practice they claim would not take place in trials of new drugs. Reflecting on the participants Reading (2007) states:

“Some may be ‘slow burners’ and have small initial benefits which are not shown in the early comparisons, but which operate cumulatively. Others may be ‘Roman candles’, which go off with a bang, burn brightly for a while but then fade away to nothing.” (p507)

Consequently, it has also not been possible to locate longitudinal research into the effectiveness of programme to examine if the claims of effectiveness are only short term.

The majority of studies also use highly trained staff whose main task is to deliver the particular programme and take referrals selected as appropriate, with parents who were suitably motivated to attend the lengthy programme (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006). If one examines the qualifications of the facilitators undertaking the programmes in many of the studies one gets an interesting picture emerging; it is likely that they are not representative of those who would normally undertake the programme in primary schools. In the examination of eleven programmes undertaken by Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) the main leader for eight groups

had an undergraduate psychology degree and a Master's degree in child development, plus extensive experience and certification in delivering the Incredible Years programme. The other three groups in his study were led by an individual with a psychology degree and training in the programme but without the certification. In addition all co-leaders either had a background in child mental health and / or a psychology degree. Similarly, the PALS project (Zeedyk, Werritty and Riach, 2002) was led by a '*development officer*', who had worked extensively in community based settings and had a qualification in counselling. The examination of a parenting programme with adoptive parents researched by Henderson and Sargant (2005) was undertaken by a qualified social worker. Jones *et al.* (2007) states that they used '*experienced and certified group leaders*', but don't give any further information about their background. Patterson, Mockford and Stewart-Brown (2004) identified the facilitators in their study as health visitors but they received weekly supervision from a clinical psychologist to discuss group dynamics and difficulties. The implementation of six Incredible Years programmes by Bell (2007) were delivered by two social workers, two community psychiatric nurses from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, a community health visitor, a teacher and a social worker. This being stated the examination of programmes by Hallam, Rogers and Shaw (2004) from an education perspective did find some programmes being undertaken by a wider group, including nursery nurses, school teaching assistants and ex head teachers.

In addition most papers examined concern the early years period with few concentrating on the middle childhood period. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006)

claim that this is a result of measurement tools not being sensitive enough. They go on to state that more recent tools allow researchers to measure children more effectively within the middle years. Although they then concluded that the tools which they employed were not sensitive enough (although this may be because the children did not fall within the clinical ranges).

There is a real paucity of research into programmes delivered in mainstream school settings and aimed at parents of children falling within the 'normal-range' of behaviour. In fact none of the studies examined fit this perfectly, the closest was Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006), but half of the children selected for the programme were within the clinical ranges for poor behaviour. In addition there have been no individual school based case studies discovered into this phenomenon that could allow researchers to gain valuable insight into the dynamics of such programmes.

As a body of knowledge the limitations of the research can be categorised as:

- Lack of research emanating from the UK
- Lack of independent research
- The validity of research, given that many control groups are offered programmes following completion of the study, and the consequential lack of longitudinal studies
- Programmes being led by highly qualified practitioners may impact on the results
- Lack of research into children falling within the middle years of childhood

- The paucity of research into programmes delivered to universal population samples, especially in mainstream school settings.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

### Introduction

In this chapter consideration is given to the wider contextual frameworks into which this research was placed. Following discourse on ontology, methodology and epistemology a case is made for positioning the research within a pragmatic approach, as defined by Punch (2009), rather than the traditional paradigm model. Given that the pragmatic approach involves the researcher developing their research around their central question, a case is made for why the research was undertaken through an instrumental case study (Wellington, 2000); this is in contrast to the ethnographic model. Given that the researcher believed that the central question was best answered through a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data, a multi methods design approach was employed (Robson, 2002). The method used in the research is then outlined in detail, including discussion on the use of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and observations.

In reaching a decision on the methodology and methods to employ for this thesis the researcher used information gained through running a parenting programme at his previous school, Eagle Junior School. Discussion and conclusions regarding this work are not detailed in this thesis due to constraints of the length of this research.



## Research focus

The focus of this thesis is to develop understanding of parenting programmes when delivered in mainstream junior school settings, explored through a case study, considering the impact for both parents and the school, combined with evidence from key policy makers at national and local level into the impact of their decisions on practice. The research was undertaken to answer the following key question:

- What understanding of parenting programmes can be gained through delivering a parenting programme in a mainstream school?

This central question leads to the sub-questions:

- What is the impact of national and local policy decisions regarding parenting programmes on the delivery of programmes in schools?
- What impact do parenting programmes have on a child's behaviour, both at home and in the school setting?
- What are the perceptions parents have of parenting programmes?

## Wider frameworks - ontology, epistemology and methodology

When examining the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches to follow the researcher had two possible starting routes, paradigm-driven or pragmatic approach. Punch (2009) states that with a paradigm-driven approach the researcher begins with a paradigm, articulates it, and develop one's research question and methods to fit it. Such a route follows that presented by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) who contend that ontology, epistemology,

methodology, and therefore method, are all interlinked; they cite the work of Hitchcock and Hughes (1995):

“...ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection.”

(Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p3)

As an alternative to the paradigm-driven approach the researcher can follow a pragmatic-approach (Punch, 2009), which Robson (2002) states has its roots in American research history. The pragmatic-approach entails the researcher starting with the research questions and then choosing the most appropriate methods to answer them. Robson (2002) contends that for pragmatists the truth is ‘*what works*’. He also points out that there is compatibility between the realist approach and pragmatism. Punch (2009) states that some universities have insisted upon paradigm-driven work but he argues that as a practitioner researcher in education it is often the question that has driven the research and this therefore is the most suitable approach to adopt.

The terms ontology, epistemology and methodology are defined well by Bartlett and Payne (1997):

“...the researcher needs to know what is knowable (*ontology*), the nature and status of knowledge claims (*epistemology*) and how to discover them (*methodology*).” (p178)

Wellington (2000) deconstructs this further by describing ontology as the differing beliefs around the nature of reality, and epistemology as the routes to acquiring knowledge. The researcher had two possible ontological starting points – a nominalism ontology (objects of thought are merely words and that there is no

independently accessible thing constituting the meaning of a word), or a realism ontology (objects have an independent existence and are not dependent for it on the knower) (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that if one begins with nominalism ontology it naturally leads to an anti-positivism epistemology (involving qualitative data), a voluntarism stance on human nature and idiographic methodology. If, on the other hand, one commences with realism ontology one's epistemological assumptions become positivism (using quantitative data), a human nature approach of determinism and a nomothetic methodology. These two different routes are often portrayed as the natural sciences versus the social sciences, with the implication that research into the social sciences (of which this research falls within) is somehow inferior (Usher, 1997). To the lay person this may seem 'black and white' – with the natural sciences having claim on quantitative measures and the social sciences following an anti-positivism epistemology reliant on qualitative indicators. Wellington (2000) argues that this division is unnecessary as he feels that knowledge is the synthesis of the two approaches.

It is the pragmatic-approach that the fieldwork in this study followed; given that this thesis follows a pragmatic-approach to research, the starting point for development of the paradigm was the central question and sub-questions. As these questions required the views of policy makers and the perspectives of participants and facilitators into the impact of the parenting programme, the researcher required a highly qualitative approach, whilst also accepting that there was quantitative data to synthesise into the perspectives. It was therefore decided that the most effective

method to follow was a mixed-methods approach as this allowed for such a synthesis.

## Method

### **Mixed-methods approach**

As stated, Wellington (2000) argues that the qualitative / quantitative division to research is unnecessary, as he feels that knowledge is the synthesis of the two approaches. Punch (2009) details the struggle that took place between the competing camps, the '*paradigm wars*', out of which the mixed-methods approach developed. He goes on to state that such an approach has had a wealth of labels including '*multimethod*', '*integrated*', '*multitrait-multi method research*', and '*methodological triangulation*', with Robson (2002) referring to it as the '*multiple methods approach*'. The mixed-method approach combines the strengths of the qualitative and quantitative approaches whilst compensating for each others' weaknesses (Punch, 2009). Robson (2002) also makes the points that it reduces '*inappropriate certainty*' as:

“Using a single method and finding a pretty clear-cut result may delude investigators into believing that they have found the ‘right’ answer. Using other, additional, methods may point to differing answers which remove specious certainty.” (p370)

Given the decision to follow a mixed-methods approach the researcher was left with which design route to follow. Punch (2009) cites Creswell and Plano Clark (2007)

who identified forty different types of mixed-methods research designs, of which there are four main types; these are summarised below from Punch (2009):

- **triangulation design** – bringing together qualitative and quantitative data to combine their strengths in a one-phase design with both types of data collected at the same time and given equal importance.
- **embedded design** – one set of data supports the other with the primary data set being the one ‘embedded’. Data can be collected concurrently or sequentially.
- **explanatory design** - Data is collected in two phases; initially quantitative data is found and then the qualitative data is used to help explain it.
- **exploratory design** – Collection of data is reverse to that of the explanatory design.

Having examined these designs it was decided to follow a ‘triangulation design’ which Punch (2009) defines as:

“...a one-phase design, where the two types of data are collected in the same time frame, and are given equal weight. Typically, it involves the concurrent but separate collecting and analysis of the two types of data, which are then merged...” (p296)

The researcher chose triangulation design as it allows the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data to be used in the design concurrently.

There are a number of triangulation designs available to the researcher, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) show in their citation of Denzin (1970) who stated that researchers have the option of methodological triangulation, space triangulation, combined levels of triangulation, theoretical triangulation and investigator triangulation. Due to time, and work pressure constraints, the researcher decided

upon the 'methodological triangulation' form, as identified by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) which they define as, "*using the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study*". This approach to research was followed by Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) who undertook a study into a universal population sample parenting programme.

Discussion now moves to the method to be employed to deliver the methodological triangulation design.

### **Case study versus ethnographic studies**

The researcher was presented with the choice of adopting a case study or ethnographic study as the design for the mixed-methods approach. Ethnographic studies involve the researcher being a participant observer (Wellington, 2000). It was not the intention in the method for the fieldwork of this research for the researcher to either deliver or participate as a parent in the parenting programme and therefore this approach was ruled out. This was due firstly to the time constraints of being a part-time researcher, working on his own on the research, and therefore not having the time to act as a facilitator to the course; and secondly as the researcher is not a parent he could not participate in that capacity. Having ruled out the ethnographic approach it was decided to follow a case study approach, as the intention was to discover intensive knowledge about a single case, i.e. a specific parenting programme at one school, and the impact of policy decisions upon it; this concurs with the definition of Thomas (2011):

"The case study method is a kind of research that concentrates on one things, looking at it in detail, not seeking to generalise from it. When you do a case study, you are interested in that thing in itself, as a whole." (p3)

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) define case studies as:

“...the in-depth study of a single event or a series of linked cases over a defined period of time. The researcher tries to locate the ‘story’ of a certain aspect of social behaviour in a particular setting and the factors influencing the situation. In this way themes, topics and key variables may be isolated.” (p317)

How therefore does the definition presented by Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) fit the research in this thesis:

- **Single event / series of linked cases**— developing understanding of parenting programmes through examination of the delivery at Swallow Junior School of one cohort in the summer term 2011; in particular telling the ‘story’ of the participants.
- **Locate the story** – in this case Swallow Junior School is put in the context of policy decisions at national and local level in the UK.
- **Defined period of time** - run between April 2011 and July 2011.
- **Particular setting** – a mainstream junior school serving an area of deprivation within England.
- **Factors influencing the situation** – the specific dynamics of the community which the school serves and the influences upon parents, children and facilitators, and consequently the parenting programme (internally and externally). In this case this also included the influence of policy, at both a national and local level.

Having decided to follow a case study approach the researcher needed to consider which style of case study to pursue. Any examination of literature pertaining to case study generates a myriad of definitions, nuances and interpretations; in the reading

for this thesis the researcher came across case studies referred to as exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, historical, psychological, extreme, critical, fitting and mis-fitting. Robson (2002) refers to the work of Yin (1994) who categorises case studies into single case, which he defines as being 'holistic', in contrast to 'multiple' case studies. Yin (1994), as cited in Robson (2002), further deconstructs holistic case studies into 'critical' case and 'extreme case' studies. Robson (2002) states that a critical case study design should be used when there is, "*clear, unambiguous and non-trivial set of circumstances where predicted outcomes will be found*". Evidence from the literature review had not identified that parenting programmes fitted within this definition – it couldn't be assured that repeating a programme identified as being successful in another, or even similar setting to Swallow Junior School, would have repeated outcomes. As parenting programmes are already widely used across the industrialised world the fieldwork in this thesis does not fit neatly within Yin's 'extreme' model which he refers to as the 'test-bed' scenario, where the researcher is testing out an already proven technique before wider use within a community.

Moses and Knutsen (2007) offer a useful discussion on case studies by defining them as 'fitting or theory confirming', or 'mis-fitting, theory-infirming or deviant'. From the perspective of this research their 'fitting' case study model would entail the fieldwork supporting the general assertion of researchers into universal parenting programmes i.e. that there is limited evidence pointing to an improvement in child behaviour; whereas the mis-fitting model would involve the research showing that this was not the case. This research design was not established to either 'prove' or



‘disprove’ wider theory on parenting classes, its aim was to allow an insight into a specific programme being delivered in a real world, non-clinical setting.

The form of case study that the researcher settled upon was the one identified in Wellington (2000) from the work of Stake (1994) – the ***instrumental case study***, defined by Wellington as:

“...to provide insight into a particular issue or to clarify a hypothesis. The actual case is secondary – its aim is to develop our understanding and knowledge of something else: The choice of case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of that other interest.”

(Wellington, 2000, p92)

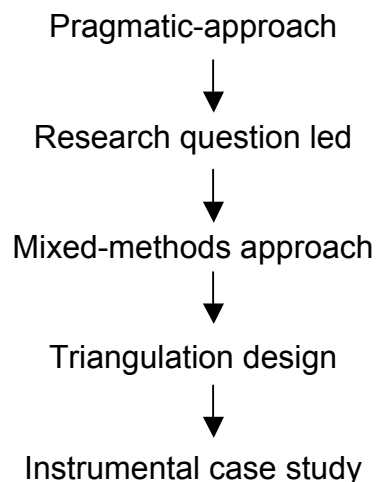
Deconstructing this definition in relation to the fieldwork in this thesis, it was anticipated that the insight into a particular issue would be the understanding behind delivery of a parenting programme, and the influences of national and local policy decisions on the programme, rather than to clarify a hypothesis. Wellington (2000) also makes it clear that the case (in this instance Swallow Junior School) is secondary; it is the understanding that is uncovered about the parenting programme that is of relevance.

It must be acknowledged that the selection of a case study methodology is not necessarily seen as a positive route to follow by all researchers, as Moses and Knutsen (2007) show in their citation of King *et al.* (1994) who stated that, “*the single observation is not a useful technique for testing hypotheses or theories.*” In addition Punch (2009) highlights concerns from a number of researchers regarding

the ability to make generalisations from case studies. Thomas (2011) dismisses this concern as he states it is not the intention of case studies to make generalisations.

## Summary

As this study was a piece of practitioner-based research the case has been put for the use of a pragmatic approach to paradigm development. The researcher took as his starting point the central question and sub-questions to develop a research design which fits the needs of these. To this end it was decided to follow a mixed-methods approach allowing the researcher to employ both qualitative and quantitative measures. The data was collected concurrently and treated in equal measure as per the triangulation design. Following a consideration of ethnographic and case study approaches it was decided to follow a case study approach, using the instrumental model cited by Wellington (2000). A diagrammatic representation of the research design is presented in 3.1.



**Diagram 3.1. Diagrammatic representation of the research design**

## Setting and context for the case study

The setting for the fieldwork is outlined here to fulfill the recommendation of Punch (2009) i.e. that readers should be presented with the context, in order that they can decide if the results from the case study can be applied to their setting, it also allows the reader to be aware of any other influences that may have impacted upon the results.

The fieldwork was undertaken at Swallow Junior School in the summer term of 2011, over a twelve-week period. The school serves a mixed catchment area of both privately owned housing and social housing. The area is an ex-mining community, within a 'shire-county'; all heavy industry has now left the locality. The school was placed in Special Measures in November 2010, shortly after the substantive headteacher had left post. The researcher was appointed as Executive Headteacher in December 2010, and was still supporting the school when the programme was undertaken. The Senior Leadership Team also consisted of an Acting Headteacher and Acting Deputy Headteacher. During this period the Executive Headteacher permanently excluded three pupils and undertook twelve fixed-term exclusions. In addition, three members of staff were placed in 'competency procedures'. As a result of the poor behaviour issues at the school the Executive Headteacher introduced a raft of measures, including:

- a revised behaviour policy;
- appointment of two Behaviour Assistants;
- appointment of a Child and Parent Support Officer;

- the development of an in-house exclusion room.

The course used at Swallow Junior School was the local authority's adapted version of the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years programme, entitled 'Positive Parents'. A senior educational psychologist facilitated the course, accompanied by a children's centre family support worker, both employed by the local authority (although parents were not told the roles of the facilitators during the course).

As the perspectives of policy makers were integral to the researcher, a number were interviewed for the thesis; the researcher, through his work within the local authority, already knew all of the professionals interviewed.

## Sample selection

Miles and Huberman (1994) state the rationale for sampling in research:

"Sampling is crucial for later analysis. As much as you might want to, you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything. Your choices – whom you look at or talk with, where, when, about what, and why – all place limits on the conclusions you can draw..." (p27)

Miles and Huberman (1994) produced a typology of the sampling strategies for qualitative inquiry from the works of Kuzel (1992) and Patton (1990). In their classification sixteen forms of sampling techniques were identified, including '*convenience sampling*'. Robson (2002) describes convenience sampling as:

"...choosing the nearest and most convenient persons to act as respondents. The process is continued until the required sample size has been reached." (p265)

The reflections given by Robson (2002) certainly make it clear of his views on this method:

“Convenience sampling is sometimes used as a cheap and dirty way of doing a sample survey. You do not know whether or not findings are representative.” (p265)

Despite these reservations Robson (2002) does acknowledge that this is the most widely used sampling method. As with the majority of practitioner research, the researcher in this fieldwork was attempting to develop understanding, or improve practice within their own establishment. Due to this research being grounded in discovering understanding about practice at Swallow Junior School a convenience sampling approach was required – whilst acknowledging that there are many reservations to this system. Thomas (2011) states that sampling questions are not as important when undertaking a case study:

“Because you are not able to generalise from this one case, there is no point in thinking about all of the sampling techniques that are used with other kinds of research. The only sense in which ‘sampling’ is relevant in a case study is the sense in which you go out and find the subject of your case study. This is your ‘sample’ and you have to justify your choice.” (p3)

Punch (2009) states that the researcher needs to address three questions in their sampling strategy:

- How will it be chosen, and why?
- How big will the sample be, and why?
- What claims will be made for the sample’s representativeness?

Punch (2009) contends that the final question is especially important where, as in this research, a convenience model is employed. Attention now moves to answering the questions posed by Punch (2009).

#### **How the sample was chosen**

All 260 children enrolled at Swallow Junior School were sent home with a flyer advertising the Positive Parenting course (an adapted version of the Webster-Stratton Incredible Years programme) in March 2011. The flyer contained a form for parents to return if they wanted to find out more information. No parents returned their form, or contacted the school about the course. The researcher therefore asked the school's Child and Parent Support Officer to personally invite a number of parents. The parents selected to be individually contacted were parents of pupils who regularly attended the school's in-house exclusion room (this was ten children). Only three of these parents agreed to participate in the course, and subsequently one of these only attended the first session. In this research the parents are given the aliases of the mother's of Jeremy and Timothy. It is acknowledged that the parents 'chosen' have been 'guided' in their choice, as they have been selected to attend by the school. The researcher also accepts that the parents who agreed to participate on the programmes may, by virtue of deciding to attend, have factors that make improvements easier, e.g. they may have already accepted that there is a problem and are willing to make changes.

With regards to the selection of the policy makers to interview, these were also selected via the 'convenience sampling' model, as they were all previously known to the researcher through his work in schools within the local authority.

#### **Size of the sample**

There were ten parents on the parenting programme, but only two were from Swallow Junior School, the rest were referrals to the course from the local Children's Centre. This number of participants corresponds favourably with other studies of parenting programmes as illustrated by Kane, Wood and Barlow (2007) who reference Spitzer *et al.* (1991)  $n = 7$ , Kilgour and Fleming (2000)  $n = 11$ , and Barlow and Stewart Brown (2001)  $n = 11$ .

## Representation

Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) state that the teacher researcher should aim to gain a sample that is as representative of the '*picture*' as possible, or as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) refer to it – the '*sampling frame*'. The key question for the researcher to ask is '*how representative is the sample of the population*', especially in light of the concerns expressed by Punch (2009) regarding the choice of 'convenience sampling'. Firstly, therefore the researcher needs to define who the population is. Punch (2009) defines population as:

“...the target group, usually large, about whom we want to develop knowledge, but which we cannot study directly; therefore we sample from that population.” (p359)

The 'population' in this research are those parents whose children attend Swallow Junior School. It is accepted that the two parents studied for this research may not be representative of all parents of children at the school. With regards to the policy makers interviewed for this research, the researcher aimed to obtain perspectives from both national and local policy makers in order to gain a good representation.

## Decisions regarding method

As outlined, the researcher decided to follow a multi-methods design, utilising qualitative and quantitative data in order to bring greater understanding to the challenges facing a parenting programme at Swallow Junior School, and the policy decisions impacting on it.

### **Qualitative data**

The qualitative researcher is presented with four main methods for collecting data – interview, observation, participant observation and documents. As the researcher in this study opted to follow a case study rather than ethnographical approach he did not act as a participant and therefore participant observer was ruled out. Equally, ‘direct’ observation was not possible. The central aim of a parenting programme is to improve the child – parent relationship, and as the children did not take part in the programme with their parents no direct observation of their relationship was possible. What was observed though was the child’s behaviour in school. In addition the researcher was not able to call upon documented evidence to reach conclusions. The researcher therefore employed interviews of parents and course facilitators, and observations of child behaviour in school as the qualitative instruments. In order to develop greater understanding of the factors influencing the programme, as recommended by Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) a number of policy makers were also interviewed, as well as the school’s Acting Headteacher.

### **Interviews**



Much has been written about the different types of interviews that the qualitative researcher can use. Punch (2009) cites the work of Minichiello *et al.* (1990) and produces the following table based on their work concerning the continuum model for interviews:

Structured interviews	Focussed or semi-structured interviews	Unstructured interviews
Standardised interviews Survey interviews Clinical history taking	In-depth interviews Survey interviews Group interviews	In-depth interviews Clinical interviews Group interviews Oral or life history

**Table 3.2. The continuum model for interviews**

On the left-hand side of the continuum, interviews are tightly structured and standardised, in contrast to those on the right which are unstructured and open-ended. Structured interviews will have planned questions whilst unstructured interviews will not and will therefore not be standardised. Punch (2009) states that the researcher needs to select the interview type appropriate to their research purposes and their central questions.

In order to gain a greater understanding of parenting programmes the researcher undertook interviews with two groups. Firstly, with the parents that participated in the fieldwork, and the facilitators who supported the programme. Secondly, with policy makers, both nationally and locally, in order to gain insight into the context in which schools deliver parenting programmes, and the school’s Acting Headteacher. In this fieldwork, given that the central question concerns the understanding of the parenting programme, the impact is likely to be different for each participating parent. Therefore although the first round of interviews was structured to ‘baseline’

the families, the second round was semi-structured, to allow the 'actors' to detail their individual journeys. Parents were asked a series of questions concerning their perceptions of their child's behaviour, both in and out of the school before the start of the course; all interviews were recorded. Following completion of the course, three months after the start of the programme, another set of interviews took place with the parents; this was to give the researcher knowledge about the initial impact of the programme. Semi-structured interviews were used in the final stage interviews, as it was felt each parent's journey was likely to be different, and therefore standardised questions were not appropriate. Examples of first and second round parent interview transcripts can be found in appendix A.

Robson (2002) identifies that semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research and defines such interviews as having:

“...predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perceptions of what seems most appropriate. Questions wording can be changed and explanations given; particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included.” (p270)

Although there are benefits from group interviews, especially respondents sparking ideas off one another, there is also the potential disadvantage that there could become a source of bias if one person dominates (Oppenheim, 1992; Wellington, 2000); the researcher therefore decided to interview the two parents individually.

Following completion of the course there was a semi-structured interview with the two facilitators. This was in order to elicit further understanding of the journey the two parents had been on and corroborate or challenge the parents' perceptions.

Nandhakumar (1997) contends that it is vital that the researcher has direct access to participants (which he refers to as 'actors'), but acknowledges that this directness does not necessarily lead to totally robust research on a number of fronts. Firstly, the researcher may have difficulty interpreting the 'actors' description of their behaviour. Secondly, the participants may distort their behaviour (which will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph). Thirdly, an actor might deliberately mislead the researcher – this was a particular concern in this research due to the tension that exists with the researcher being the child's Executive Headteacher. Finally, Nandhakumar (1997) claims that the 'actors' may not be able to give an explanation of their behaviour as it is so integral to their social routine that they are unable to recognise its significance.

Returning to the second point made by Nandhakumar (1997) concerning participants distorting their behaviour, it is worth considering the '*Hawthorne effect*' on parents. Moses and Knutsen (2007) state that when undertaking research one needs to be mindful that when a researcher commences their work they automatically alert the world to what is being studied, and therefore the observed may alter their responses by virtue of knowing they are being examined, and not as a result of the impact of any actions taken. They contend that in the medical world the Hawthorne effect can often be alleviated by not informing the patient as to whether they are receiving the actual medication or a placebo; this is not as easy to achieve in 'real world' research. It was hoped that the use of a triangulation design would alleviate the Hawthorne effect.

As stated, as part of the case study, the researcher also undertook semi-structured interviews with a number of key professionals/policymakers. Having acknowledged that being a headteacher and insider researcher may have presented challenges within the school setting, the key role played by the researcher, as a head within the local authority, allowed easier access to policy makers than some other researchers may have found. In undertaking this research the researcher was able to interview a number of key professionals who had an influence on policy making, which would impact on delivery of parenting programmes at Swallow Junior School, namely:

- Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools' Advisor for Parents and Carers;
- Assistant Director of Children's Services (with responsibility for parenting) in the local authority served by the school;
- Head of Family Strategy at the Department for Education;
- Parenting Co-ordinator in the local authority served by the school.

It was fortunate that when the researcher's main school (Treeside Junior School) was in Special Measures the HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools) that Ofsted allocated was also the Ofsted Advisor for Parents and Carers. On the school's exit from Special Measures in 2009, the HMI made the judgement that the school's provision for supporting parents at the school was graded as 'outstanding'. As a consequence, the HMI revisited Treeside Junior School to undertake a 'good practice' visit in July 2011; during this visit the researcher was able to interview her regarding her views on parenting programmes.

The researcher interviewed the Assistant Director of Children's Services, for the local authority in which the fieldwork took place, in person, in November 2011. The Assistant Director reported directly to the Strategic Director of Children's Services, and had responsibility for parenting support and interventions, as well as Special Educational Needs. The authority is predominately rural in nature, with a number of urban conurbations; some of these areas suffer from severe social-deprivation. Statistical neighbours for the authority include Cumbria, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. The authority has been under a Conservative administration since 2010; previously it was under Labour control.

As a member of the National Home / School Development Group the researcher was able to gain access to the Head of Family Strategy at the Department for Education. This interview allowed the researcher to explore changes in departmental policy towards parenting support as a result of the change of government in May 2010. The interview was undertaken by telephone in April 2012.

The Parenting Co-ordinator interviewed had been in post since 2007, having previously worked within the special needs department of the council; her initial parenting development role was financed through the Parenting Early Intervention Pathfinder programme. She was interviewed in person in May 2011.

In addition, the school's Acting Headteacher, responsible to the Executive Headteacher (who was the researcher) was interviewed to examine any impact of policy changes or austerity cuts.

## **Observation**

It was the intention of the researcher to act as ‘naturalistic observer’, i.e. to neither manipulate nor stimulate the behaviour of those observed (Punch, 2009) – in this case the parent-child relationship, other than by delivery of the parenting programme. Given that the variable this research was endeavouring to observe and measure (the parent-child relationship) was hidden (the latent trait), the researcher could only measure it by inference from its observable indicators. In this case the observable indicators were:

- externalised behaviour of the child in the school setting;
- changes (or not) in the parent – child relationship as reported by the parent.

Observations were facilitated through gaining an insight into the teacher’s perceptions of the child’s behaviour through the teacher ratings of behaviour (see below). In addition, both parents and the facilitators were interviewed post-test to elicit from them observations of improvements in the relationships.

### **Teacher ratings of behaviour**

Teaching staff were asked to make an observation of the child’s behaviour on commencement, on completion of the course and sixteen months following the programme. Staff selected from a bank of statements to describe their observation of behaviour in the classroom and on the playground (see appendix B). The descriptors were developed by the researcher as an attempt to classify behaviour in light of the common behaviours found at the school. It is acknowledged that the development of these indicators was not ‘scientific’ but merely based upon the researcher’s experiences of behaviours exhibited at Swallow Junior School.

## **Quantitative data**

A mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to use quantifiable data as well as qualitative evidence. This research used three existing quantitative measurements used by the local authority when delivering parenting programmes; namely:

- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Parent Scale
- Warwick-Edinburgh Well-Being Scale

Parents completed each of these questionnaires before commencement of the course, and during the last week of the course; in addition, teachers completed the SDQ questionnaires at the same points.

## **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire**

Before commencement, and on completion of the programme, parents and teaching staff were asked to complete the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997, 1999; Warnick, Bracken & Stanislav, 2007) (see appendix C). The SDQ has been used in other studies of parenting programmes including Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) and Patterson *et al.* (2002) (although this was with children falling within the clinical range). SDQ was developed as an alternative to the Rutter questionnaires (Goodman, 1999) for the quantification of child behaviour, as at the time the Rutter questionnaires were around thirty years old. SDQ is comprised of twenty-five questions, ten focussing on strengths, fourteen on difficulties and one neutral question. The 'informant-related'

version of the questionnaire is designed for completion by parents and teachers of children between the ages of four to sixteen years old, and a 'self-report' edition is available for children aged eleven to sixteen years (which was not used in this research). Goodman (1997) claims that the use of the same questionnaire for teachers and parents allows for greater correlation. The Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire gave the researcher a score for each child for emotional difficulties, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-social as well as an overall score. Each of the dimension scores, and the overall scores, were analysed on completion of the fieldwork.

### **Parent Scale**

The Parent Scale was developed by Arnold, O'Leary, Wolff & Acker (1993) in order to measure parental discipline practices; the assessment consists of a 30 item self-reported scale for parent to complete (see appendix D). Rhoades & O'Leary (2007) concluded:

“...the PS [Parent Scale] is a cost effective, self-report measure of parental discipline. Its ease of administration makes the scale attractive for use by clinicians. Individual items, as well as the summary Overreactive [*sic*], Lax and Hostile scores, may indicate parent-specific points of intervention.”

(p145)

The scale gave the researcher a standardised score against the following three areas:

- The laxness of the parent's discipline methods;
- How over-reactive the parent is when dealing with their child;
- The degree of hostility towards the child.



## Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale

The universities of Warwick and Edinburgh developed the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) to measure the mental well-being of respondents, based on their experiences over the previous two weeks (see appendix E).

“[WEMWBS] comprises 14 items that related to an individual’s state of mental well-being (thoughts and feelings)...Responses are made on a 5-point scale ranging from ‘none of the time’ to ‘all of the time’. Each item is worded positively and together they cover most, but not all, attributes of mental well-being including hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives.”

(Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008, p3)

In a review of the scale Tennant *et al.* (2007) found that there was a high level of internal consistency and reliability but reflected that further research was required in order to assess its robustness, as there were concerns that it was not ‘*sensitive to change*’.

As a number of questionnaires were used in the study, as part of the quantitative data in the mixed-methods approach, the researcher feels it is important to examine literature pertaining to their use. Oppenheim (1992) makes it clear that the term ‘questionnaire’ is very broad and can encompass a myriad of research techniques:

“Some practitioners would reserve the term exclusively for self-administered and postal questionnaires. While other would include interview schedules...In a different way the word ‘questionnaire’ is sometimes used to distinguish a set of questions, including perhaps some open-ended ones, from more rigidly constructed scales or tests.”

(p100)

Given this definition of questionnaires, some researchers may class items used within this research such as the Parent-Scale and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale as too ‘rigidly’ constructed to be technically classed as questionnaires.

Robson (2002) also identifies that questionnaires can be completed either through '*self-completion*', '*face-to-face interview*' or '*telephone interview*'; in this study it was decided that all the questionnaires / scales used would be self-administered.

Oppenheim (1992) contends that the real 'test' of the effectiveness of a questionnaire is the value of the information that it gives the researcher.

### **Parental perception questionnaire**

In addition to the three commercially produced questionnaires identified above, the researcher also developed his own questionnaire for parents to complete. This questionnaire was distributed to all parents of children at Swallow Junior School. The aim of the questionnaire was to elicit from parents reasons why they decided not to participate in the parenting programme at the school, and their general perceptions of programmes.

## **Objectivity and validity**

### **Objectivity**

Before discussion can be held on objectivity, further discussion is needed of the role played by the researcher within this case study. The researcher studied a group of parents and children from Swallow Junior School as they undertook a parenting programme led by two facilitators. The researcher was also the Executive Headteacher of the school the parents' children attend. As discussed earlier, the researcher can still be classed as a non-participant observer due to not participating as either the course facilitator or as a parent attending the course.

Having identified that the researcher was a non-participant observer, discussion still needs to be held into the objectivity of the head teacher, could he be objective? Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) point-out that objectivity is not a major issue if one adopts a positivism approach, as this epistemology has as one of its central tenets that there is a 'truth' that can be validated, and therefore any bias that the researcher implies will be discovered through the research methods employed. In this research though the researcher followed an anti-positivist approach, as he believes that there is no absolute 'truth'. The researcher therefore needed to be mindful of applying values and moral judgements from his own background, what Wellington (2000) refers to as, '*preconceptions and prejudices*'. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) acknowledge that this can be difficult for the school based researcher as they argue that school issues by nature involve values, opinions, beliefs and attitudes. Wellington (2000) refers to the possibility that the researcher's observations or interpretations may be '*value laden*' as an '*inherent danger*', although he concludes that these are surmountable if the researcher is able to recognise these, reflects upon them and allows open interpretation. In the instance of the researcher in this study such influences could include the way the researcher was parented himself. As the researcher is not a parent this could be seen as a positive, by the fact that he will not have to reflect on his own parenting style. Punch (2009) makes the point that the practitioner researcher is in no different a position to any researcher. He states that all researchers come to a project with a '*position*' and that there is no such thing as a '*position-free-project*'. He also contends that both the non-participant and participant researcher approaches have

merit. Although the insider may have less objectivity they are likely to have greater understanding of the topic, and vice-versa for the non-participant researcher.

The researcher in this instance falls within what Wellington (2000) would refer to as 'practitioner research', or in an education setting 'teacher-researcher' (Punch, 2009). In table 3.3 the strengths and weaknesses of undertaking practitioner research, as identified by Wellington (2000), are outlined.

Potential advantages	Possible problems
Prior knowledge and experience of the setting / context (inside knowledge)	Preconceptions, prejudices
Improved insight into the situation and people involved	Not as 'open minded' as an 'outsider' researcher
Easier access	Lack of time (if working inside the organization) and distractions / constraints due to being 'known'
Better personal relationships, e.g. with teachers, pupils	'Prophet in own country' difficulty when reporting or feeding back
Practitioner insight may help with the design, ethics and reporting of the research	Researcher's status in the organization, e.g. a school
Familiarity	Familiarity

**Table 3.3 Practitioner research: potential advantages and problems (Wellington, 2000)**

Punch (2009) states that showing awareness and having discussion on the possible effects can offset such problems. In the case of this study it is hoped that the researcher has been open in his concerns regarding the conflict that exists between being the headteacher of the school and researcher. Despite the reservations of Wellington (2000) it is envisaged that the use of a number of data sources, allowed for 'data triangulation' to negate the concerns he identifies.

## Validity

Robson (2002) states that validity concerns whether the findings of the research are, “*really about what they appear to be about*”. Punch (2009) makes it clear that validity has different meanings dependent upon if a qualitative or quantitative measure is being employed. As the research in this thesis relies predominately on qualitative data it is validity of this type of data that the researcher needed to be most aware of.

Moses and Knutsen (2007) breakdown validity into ‘*internal validity*’ (tight control of the variables in order that with confidence one can state that correlation equals causation), and ‘*external validity*’ (how far the research can be generalised into the wider world).

### **Internal validity**

Robson (2002) outlines the work of Campbell and Stanley (1963) and Cook and Campbell (1979) who between them identified twelve possible threats to the internal validity of a piece of research. Having examined the twelve elements, the researcher identified which of these may have impacted upon the research in this thesis (see table 3.4).

<b>Threats to internal validity</b>	<b>Judgement in relation to the fieldwork in this thesis</b>
History	Possible
Testing	Unlikely
Instrumentation	No – same measures employed
Regression	Unlikely
Mortality	High probability
Maturation	Possible

Selection	Possible
Selection by maturation interaction	Unlikely
Ambiguity about causal direction	Possible
Diffusion of treatments	Unlikely
Compensatory equalization of treatments	No
Compensatory rivalry	No

**Table 3.4: Judgements concerning internal validity in relation to the fieldwork in this thesis**

What can be seen from the above analysis is that internal validity could not be guaranteed in this study, as a result of not being able to isolate variables. Such variables included a change of circumstances at home, or teacher absence (which did occur). The researcher was therefore very mindful when undertaking analysis of the impact of the programmes as to whether any of the twelve points identified in table 3.4 could have been influencing results.

### **External validity**

With regard to external validity (generalisability) it could be argued that the decision to follow a single case study immediately prevents the generalisation of results to a wider community (Moses and Knutsen, 2007). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) reject this and state that generalisation can take a number of forms in case studies, including from the single case to the class of instances that it is representative of; or from features of the single instance to a multiplicity of classes with the same features; and finally from the single features of part of the case to the whole of that case. Despite their reservations Moses and Knutsen (2007) state that case studies can be used to make generalisations in the sense that by adding to the collection of case studies on a given subject it creates '*building blocks*'. It is envisaged that this research will allow the generalisability identified by Moses and Knutsen (2007) i.e. it

will help create '*building blocks*' to further understanding of parenting programmes when delivered in mainstream school settings, especially as the case study includes interviews with policy makers.

Punch (2009) sets three tests for the generalisation of qualitative research. Firstly, is the **sample diverse enough**, does it capture enough variation in order to encourage transfer of the findings to other situations? As stated earlier it can be argued that the group of parents is representative of parents within the school – from a school point of view they are similar and therefore if the study was replicated similar outcomes may be expected. What cannot be surmised is that if this programme was replicated in the same form at another school the same results would be achieved, as Nandhakumar (1997) states

“Because interpretations are time and context dependent, generalisability cannot be extended reliably from a sample to the population. The ideas and theories generated in one setting can therefore provide only a basis for understanding similar phenomena in other settings rather than enabling the prediction of behaviour in other contexts. As interpretations are seen as changing over time, replicating interpretive research on different occasions will not yield the same results.” (p216)

The second point Punch (2009) raises is that the context should be '**thickly described**', in order that any reader can come to a conclusion about the transferability to their situation; it is hoped that the thesis has 'thickly described' the context for the reader. His final point is that **concepts are abstracted sufficiently** in the data analysis in order to permit their application to other settings. This last point was borne-in-mind during the data analysis stage.

## Ethics

As with all 'real world' research it is vital that the researcher considers ethical issues and follows prescribed guidelines. Punch (2009) states that following a qualitative approach creates more '*acute*' ethical issues as such studies involve, "...*the most sensitive, intimate and innermost matters in people's lives*". As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) argue that if one follows an anti-positivism epistemology it naturally leads to a voluntarism stance on human nature. This involves the participants in the research having informed consent (Homan, 2002; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000), and freely choosing to take part in the research. As this research is most closely aligned to the anti-positivism approach it was felt that informed consent was appropriate. Punch (2009) also advocates that consent should be 'on-going' and not a one-off event. A copy of the consent form issued to parents before the commencement of the project can be found in appendix J.

The researcher requested approval for the fieldwork to the University of Birmingham, and received permission to proceed (a copy of the submission form is attached in appendix H). This submission indicated that the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2004) would be followed. Parents were informed that they had a right to leave the research at any point, their identity, and that of their children, and even the school name, would not be divulged at any point in the research (a copy of the parental consent form can be found in appendix I). Parents were informed of the purpose of the research and were offered a summary of the research once completed (a copy of the summary for parents is located in appendix J). In addition, all of the professionals interviewed gave



informed consent to being interviewed; all were informed that they could request a copy of the research once it was completed.

The debate about consent from children is a thorny one, as illustrated by Homan (2002) who cites Ball (1985) as stating, “*No one consults the children*”. The BERA (2004) guidelines accept that children might not be able to give informed consent due to their age and states that where they are unable to give their consent the researcher should explore ways to enable them to “*make authentic responses*” (BERA, 2004). Homan (2002) contends that often in educational research children are not the subject of the research. It is this last assertion that the researcher believes fits with this research; it is not the children who are being observed and ‘measured’ but the parenting programme. Consequently, the children were not asked for their consent; although it is intended that there will be a positive effect on the children i.e. that their behaviour will improve, and for their relationship with their parent(s) to be more positive.

In devising the research design a decision was made not to have a ‘control group’. With a control group the researcher would be morally obliged to run a parenting programme for those parents within this group – this would cause problems as some of the children at this point would have left the school to commence secondary education, as programmes at the school could only be delivered once a year. In addition all parents had already been offered a place on the parenting programme but declined the invitation through the general invite sent home.

## Presentation and analysis of findings

How a researcher presents their information is of importance not only to the integrity of the research, but also to how it is interpreted by the wider professional, and non-professional communities. Where the researcher has concerns about the validity of their data and / or its generalisability these caveats need to be made clear. The researcher opted to follow the approach to qualitative data analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) which Punch (2009) refers to as '*transcendental realism*'. This approach has as its main components, data reduction; data display; and drawing and verifying conclusions.

Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that data reduction is a continuous process that actually happens before collection commences when the researcher decides which data to select, and which to leave out. During the data collection process the researcher reduces data further until the final report is completed. Following each taped interview, the researcher in this fieldwork replayed and transcribed the taped interviews in order that a list of tentative categories for analysis was generated at an early stage, supported by further areas arising from the questionnaire analysis. This resulted in a fairly extensive list; data was sifted regularly but care was taken not to draw early conclusions. At the conclusion of the fieldwork substantial time was spent in reading and rereading the data, adding to a list of possible categories. The process of data reduction was then begun to form a manageable number of units for analysis of data. This resulted in the clustering of data into seven tentative categories. Data was then coded according to the themes; these tentative categories were:

- Austerity cuts
- Influences on parenting programmes
- School involvement in parenting programmes
- Measuring impact
- Cost implications
- Compulsory attendance on course
- Positive affects of parenting programmes

Data was coded trying to identify similar phrases, patterns themes and relationships. This then built up the themes identified through the noting of the most powerful statements across the varying sources of data. Appendix A shows the coding used as part of the data reduction exercise on the transcripts post test interview with one of the parents, and Appendix G shows a coded interview with the local authority Parenting Co-ordinator.

The second element to data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) is data display, which they define as:

“...an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusions drawing and action...Looking at displays helps us to understand what is happening and to do something – either analyze further or take action – based on that understanding.” (p11)

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that it is time to move away from the ‘*extended text*’ model of displaying data and instead incorporate more matrices, graphs and charts. It is hoped that through the use of such mechanisms the reader will be able to gain greater understanding. The third element to data analysis is ‘*conclusion drawing and verification*’, and Miles and Huberman (1994) make reference to the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in stating that conclusions will have

been emerging to the researcher from the start of the fieldwork. Miles and Huberman (1994) go on to state that whilst these conclusions may have been evident from an early stage in this analysis section the researcher needs to be able to verify their findings.

## Chapter 4 – Fieldwork

### Introduction

Chapter four presents the main findings of the research undertaken to develop understanding into the challenges facing the implementation of parenting programmes when delivered in mainstream school settings. This chapter highlights the main findings from the interviews with policy makers, analysis of the parent questionnaires and learning from the fieldwork study, including the findings of the interview with the school's Acting Headteacher. It will focus on key themes that have been identified through the data analysis, using key quotes from the research, linked with academic literature to reinforce the conclusions drawn. The research aim was to gain understanding of parenting programmes in mainstream school settings through a case study approach. It was planned that the research would answer the following key question:

- What understanding of parenting programmes can be gained through delivering a parenting programme in a mainstream school?

This central question lead to the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of national and local policy decisions regarding parenting programmes on the delivery of programmes in schools?
- What impact do parenting programmes have on a child's behaviour, both at home and in the school setting?
- What are the perceptions parents have of parenting programmes?

The key themes that emerged once the data had been reduced were:

- 1) the creation of new policy regarding parenting programme delivery;
- 2) the impact of cuts in funding, linked to austerity measures, impacting upon parenting programme delivery;
- 3) understanding of the parenting programme in the fieldwork study, including the impact on parents and pupils;
- 4) parental perceptions of parenting programmes.

## The creation of policy

It was important to develop an understanding of the policy decisions behind current practice regarding parenting programmes in order to gain a greater insight into the delivery of programmes in mainstream schools. Therefore the researcher interviewed a number of key individuals linked to the formulation of policy, at both national and local level. As stated in Chapter 3, the researcher was able to gain access to the Head of Family Strategy at the Department for Education, the Ofsted Advisor for Parents and Carers (one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools), the Assistant Director of Education (in the authority where the fieldwork was undertaken), and the Parenting Co-ordinator in the same authority. The following key themes were explored with these policy-makers:

- 1) influences on the development of national and local policy regarding the delivery of parenting programmes.
- 2) given the latest influences on programmes, what approaches to delivering programmes are currently being explored at both national and local levels?
- 3) the role of schools in delivering parenting programmes.

## **Influences on the development of national and local policy regarding the delivery of parenting programmes**

Great Britain has been accustomed to single party governments since the late 1940s, but in 2010 the Conservative party joined with the Liberal Democrat party to form the current Coalition Government. The country is used to policy being developed from a single political dogma; usually referred to as 'left-wing', 'right-wing', and occasionally, 'centre-politics' philosophy. Therefore the major political perspective to have influenced the development of parenting programmes from 1997 to 2010 (during the Labour administration) could be perceived as 'left-wing'. Bell (2005) identified three political agendas at play in the development of Labour policy towards supporting families:

- 1) securing stable families, as 'good parenting' was seen as a 'solution' to a range of social problems;
- 2) support for families should be delivered through an inter-agency approach;
- 3) services for families should be delivered as community-based projects.

As the current coalition parties do not share the same historical political philosophies, can it be ascertained if one political dogma appears to be more dominant than another in the current support offered to families? At the time of the interview with the Family Strategy Unit at the Department for Education, the minister leading on parenting within the department was Sarah Teather MP, the Liberal Democrat minister in the Department for Education; although the Secretary of State for Education was the Conservative, Michael Gove. When questioned about the influences the Department was receiving in the development of policy since the 2010 General election four key aspects were outlined:

- the ‘Review of Poverty and Life Chances’, an independent review commissioned by the government (Field, 2010);
- ‘Early Interventions – the Next Steps’ (Allen, 2011);
- the Deputy Prime-Minister’s work regarding social-mobility;
- the interest shown by the Prime-Minister in parenting support.

Given that Frank Field and Graham Allen who chaired the ‘Review of Poverty and Life Chances’ and ‘Early Interventions – the Next Steps’ respectfully, are both Labour MPs, it would appear that current policy is being developed through a synthesis of a number of political perspectives. This being said, there is evidence that Conservative philosophies are having a heavy influence. For example, the Head of Family Strategy stated that the department wants organisations to see delivering parenting programmes in a different manner:

“...[the Department for Education is] really trying the help them [providers] think about this in more of an entrepreneurial way.”  
(Head of Family Strategy, Department for Education)

The department therefore undertook a tendering exercise for organisations to bid to deliver programmes for the government’s pilot universal programme (‘Can Parent’); this was open to both state funded and voluntary organisation. In addition, in the pilot a ‘high-street’ retailer was enlisted to distribute vouchers to parents, which can then be redeemed for parenting classes.

“...the way that we are contracting...[providers] is on a concession basis, so they only get paid the vouchers that are cashed with them. So what we’ve tried to do is create as near a market environment as possible, so they’re in effect competing with one another.”  
(Head of Family Strategy, Department for Education)



A number of key, current, Conservative policies can be seen in these approaches:

- 1) the use of 'market-forces' to determine the effectiveness of a programmes;
- 2) the Private Sector being employed to deliver government services (therefore reducing central governance);
- 3) the use of 'voluntary organisations' to deliver government programmes, consequently delivering on David Cameron's 'Big Society' agenda.

The interview with the Head of Family Strategy allowed the Researcher to reflect on Bell (2005) regarding the influences on Labour policy; the coalition policies point to a move away from inter-agency working and community services identified by Bell (2005), with a move to the private and voluntary sectors providing some of the support.

The interviews conducted with local government officers did not elicit any significant local influences being borne on the development of local policy regarding parenting programmes. The Assistant Director of Children's Services interviewed stated that the elected members were keen to participate in the government's pilot 'Can Parent' scheme, but it should be remembered that this was also a Conservative administration.

### **The approaches to delivering programmes currently being explored at both national and local level**

As stated in the Literature Review, during the Labour government of 1997 to 2010 parenting programmes became more common in the UK and the Labour government was committed to their use (Cabinet Office, 2006; Department of Health, 2004; Department for Education and Skills, 2004b). During the Labour

administration parenting programmes were mainly targeted programmes in a 'reactionary' manner, to deal with 'problem families'. The Head of the Family Strategy highlighted a significant change in national policy under the Coalition Government, with the establishment of a whole-population sample pilot project aimed at parents of children under the age of five; this project has been given the title 'Can Parent'. The aim of the pilot project is to deliver parenting programmes to any parent with a child under the age of five in one of four designated areas in more of a preventative model.

"So there's been a lot of different things done as a result of the new Coalition Government looking at the issue of parenting, and particularly looking at the evidence in terms of the power of the home environment in the early years and how if you get off on the right foot of the child...your trajectory in life tends to be a happier one. If your early years' experience is not terribly brilliant, it's really difficult for school and other things to compensate for that later down the track. In recognition of that, [there is a desire by the Coalition Government] to look at whether offering more help to everyone around parenting actually might be an effective and useful investment. That's where the trial sprang from really.

(Head of Family Strategy, Department for Education)

The move to a 'universal' model has been undertaken despite, as shown in the Literature Review, there being little evidence to show impact of such programmes in significantly improving pupil behaviour (Scott, O'Connor and Futh, 2006). In addition, the Head of the Family Strategy stated that the department was keen not to establish the pilot in areas of affluence, where the "*sharp-elbowed middle classes predominate*", as they want a more '*realistic*' picture of uptake by parents. Research though from an Australian study of the universal programme, 'Triple-P', found that better educated parents were more likely to attend parenting programmes (Sanders *et al.*, 2006). In addition Webster-Stratton (1998) cites Wahler (1980) and Dumas and Whaler (1983) who identified less positive results when parenting programmes

are undertaken with parents of low income. It will be interesting therefore to see what the demographic for the 'Can Parent' programme is despite the pilot areas being in more economically deprived areas of the country.

At a local level officers had identified a move to a more preventative model in the delivery of parenting programmes by the government, but also a commitment to a targeted, reactionary approach:

“...I think what's happening is possibly that they [the government] see two ends of the spectrum. So there's the universality programme, and then there's a kind of assertive, gripping, which is associated with what was the FIP [Family Intervention Project] and is now the Intensive Family Service, because Mr Pickles [Eric Pickle, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government] talks about 120,000 families which are the worst families in the country, and there he definitely sees gripping...and assertive work is the way forward.”

(Assistant Director of Children's Services)

Given that Eric Pickles sees a need to 'grip' families with significant problems, the researcher questioned the Assistant Director as to whether the authority had pursued compelling parents to attend parenting programmes. The Assistant Director outlined that the authority had limited powers to compel parents to attend parenting programmes, stating that in most instances this can only be done if there are issues regarding the child's attendance. Headteachers had been issued with guidance on the use of Parenting Orders to compel parents to attend programmes, and the authority had trialled their use in an urban area of the county; headteachers had been reluctant to use such orders.

Given that national policy was to move towards a more 'preventative model' for the delivery of parenting programmes, and as one of the 'Can Parent' pilot areas falls

within the local authority where the fieldwork took place, the researcher was keen to learn if they would be submitting a bid to be a provider. Elected members of the authority were keen to participate in the 'Can Parent' scheme:

“...(a) because I think it brought status to the local authority because we're a pathfinder [Early Intervention Pathfinder project]...and (b) because I think through the universal offer, and Sarah Teather, it's part of the Coalition Government's policy. We have a Conservative administration, so they're eager to see their policy active...”

(Assistant Director of Children's Services)

The researcher identified that funding of the 'Can Parent' scheme may impact on the type of provision providers will be able to provide. The Department for Education was only planning on funding the local authority £100 per family; therefore in this authority they would not be able to deliver their normal 'Positive Parents' course (an adapted form of Webster Stratton's Incredible Years programme). Instead, the authority was examining delivering an adapted course, based on 'best practice'. This would include the core elements of 'Positive Parenting', but could be delivered in three sessions (rather than the normal twelve); the scheme proposed therefore points to an adapted programme, similar to the Australian Positive Parenting Program (Triple P). As stated in the Literature Review, there are six levels of intervention in the Triple P programme; the authority's plans point to a scheme similar to Triple P levels one and two. The authority's planned universal programme is therefore more likely to fall within what Sanders and Morawska (2006) refer to as “a public health approach to parenting”. Given that the pilot project is a universal approach to parenting programme delivery the Assistant Director raised concerns about the project's ability to meet the needs of such a wide-range of parental needs.

The Assistant Director reflected that to achieve this the authority might have to deliver four different courses:

“I suppose you could have a nought one – one bit on babies, one bit on toddlers, and one bit on readiness for school.”

(Assistant Director of Children’s Services)

### **The role of schools in delivering parenting programmes**

Given that the Department for Education is committed to delivering parenting programmes through the ‘Can Parent’ scheme, the researcher was keen to discover if the Department had any plans to encourage schools to deliver programmes, either through this scheme or in a more ‘traditional’ manner. The Head of the Family Strategy stated that the Department did not currently have a policy to encourage schools to deliver programmes, but did state:

“One of the things that we hope to look at through the trial is...trying to understand the scope for there being more support available, more generally, for families with children of other ages. That’s being linked more strongly to the schools...to the school system. The potential for that, we certainly want to explore.”

(Head of Family Strategy, Department for Education)

The interview with the Ofsted national advisor identified that inspectors would no longer be giving a judgement on the effectiveness of a school’s role in supporting parents (although the advisor informed the researcher that inspectors were still being encouraged to discuss this area in the main commentary of the school). The move away from grading parental support was part of a raft of changes to the inspection system brought in by Sir Michael Wilshaw, the new Chief Inspector of Schools, in January 2012. The rhetoric behind these changes was to allow inspectors to concentrate on the ‘core’ elements of school provision, i.e. leadership,

attainment, teaching and learning, and behaviour. The interview with the Acting Headteacher of Swallow Junior School shows that the move to Ofsted no longer grading parental support may lead to schools stopping providing parenting programmes.

“Ofsted’s judgement about our effectiveness in supporting parents has focussed our attention on this area, with the focus now on how well we support children on Free School Meals we might need to direct resources to this area, and away from supporting our mums.”

(Swallow Junior School Acting Headteacher)

The Ofsted National Advisor of Parents and Carers was at pains to point out that she feels there is a link between effective parental support and schools being judged overall as outstanding:

“I can tell you that there is a direct correlation between those schools that score highly for parental engagement and those that come out as outstanding. Almost all schools that are outstanding have outstanding parental engagement as well. I believe that there is no coincidence there. Those schools that have outstanding qualities are also those that engage very well [with parents].”

(Ofsted HMI Advisor for Parents and Carers)

In the local authority studied it would appear that little thought had gone into using schools and school staff to deliver parenting programmes. The Assistant Director couldn’t recall if they had tried to target school staff for training to deliver parenting programmes. On reflection, the Assistant Director thought the commitment schools would need to make in delivering the course might have put them off applying to train staff as facilitators:

“I seem to remember we advertised it [the training]...but whether we actually advertised it through schools...I don’t honesty know...is quite an investment on behalf of a school.”

(Assistant Director of Children’s Services)

Despite Ofsted judging schools on its effectiveness of supporting families for a number of years prior to 2012, it would appear that few schools have seen parenting programmes as a vehicle to deliver this support. In the local authority studied only around ten schools had requested parenting programmes to be delivered in their schools; these were mostly requests from schools in deprived areas of the county. With the exception of one school, schools had been unable to recruit enough parents to run a course – usually they would only obtain two or three parents; this concurs with the findings in the fieldwork in this thesis.

### **The impact of austerity cuts on parenting programmes**

The Coalition Government formed in 2010 inherited a significant national debt, a consequence of the international recession; the government's approach to this differed from the previous Labour administration in that they set about a radical reduction in government finance, widely referred to as the 'austerity cuts'. The researcher explored how these cuts had impacted upon the delivery of parenting programmes at both a national and local level. The Head of Family Strategy, reflecting on the impact of the austerity cuts, referred to a different way of financing schools, rather than cuts. Although the previous government had not directly funded schools to deliver parenting programmes, what they had done was to provide 'ring-fenced' funding to schools to deliver 'extended services' (funding to provide services to parents).

“...it is no longer an initiative that is being deliberately pressed from the centre of government...the position is that it's the schools to decide how they want to use their money...If schools see the value in having an extended offer because it enables them to serve their population better, then it's much better for them to be pushing that and making the choices about that locally, than it is for central government...” (Head of Family Strategy, Department for Education)

One cut that the Head of Family Strategy was able to identify, with regards to parenting programmes, was a decision made before the 2010 General Election to cease funding the National Academy for Parenting Research (NAPR). Its work on training professionals in the parenting sector was initially transferred to the Children's Workforce Development Council (now also defunct), whilst King's College, London, has continued some of its research duties (the College was originally part of the consortium that established the academy).

As of November 2011, funding had not had a significant impact on the delivery of programmes in the local authority studied, partly because the authority had trained facilitators largely in posts unaffected by cuts e.g. educational psychologists. The Assistant Director was realistic in identifying that heads of service (for example the Head of Educational Psychology) may be reluctant to provide staff to undertake parenting programmes as further cuts are made, as they will have to concentrate on their 'core-tasks', although the Assistant Director did state:

“...one could argue that in terms of really affecting change, maybe this should be a core-task.”

(Assistant Director of Children's Services)

The local authority had also decided to continue funding the Parenting Co-ordinator post. Previously, during the Labour government's Early Years' Pathfinder project the authority had been given half-million pounds to train facilitators to deliver parenting programmes and fund the Parent Support Advisor (PSA) post; as a result of recent cuts, the Parenting Co-ordinator stated that many authorities had made their PSAs redundant. Ironically, given that this authority had been funded half-million pounds



to deliver parenting programmes, at a recent meeting a representative from the Department for Education had stated that they were planning on providing half-million pounds *across the country* to train staff in supporting parents (a fraction of the amount awarded to each authority through the Pathfinder project by the previous government). An implication of the loss of PSAs was that the networking opportunities the Parenting Co-ordinator had were now diminished. In order to continue funding programmes, the authority had linked the delivery of programmes to the Intensive Family Service (previously known as the Family Intensive Programme). In addition, financial restraints have meant the authority has had to continue to use parenting programmes in a targeted approach, rather than extending their delivery to a universal entitlement (although the pilot 'Can Parent' scheme will address this in a small area of the authority).

It is clear that the authority has endeavoured to protect parenting programmes from cutbacks, including maintaining the position of Parenting Co-ordinator, but financial pressures have reduced the authority's ability to fund taxis for parents to attend parenting programmes (previously provided when programmes were out of the parent's home area). The authority is now planning to fund taxis for the first few weeks only, until parents get 'hooked', and then they will pay for public transport or car sharing, as a more cost effective alternative. Another impact of the austerity cuts came in January 2012 when the newly appointed Strategic Director of Children's Services undertook a reorganisation of the directorate to save costs; in this reorganisation the Assistant Director, whom the researcher interviewed, lost her post. Her duties were subsumed into the duties of one of the other directors.

## The impact of the parenting programme on parents and pupils in the fieldwork study

The fieldwork, undertaken at Swallow Junior School in 2011, presented the researcher with evidence from a variety of sources identifying the impact of the parenting programme on the children's behaviour in the study; and identified issues regarding holding a parenting programme in a school setting.

### **Fieldwork findings**

The evidence collected and analysed was for the two Swallow Junior School mothers who attended the parenting programme and the impact on their sons. As stated in the methodology chapter, in order to assess the effectiveness of the parenting programme for these two families, the researcher selected to use the qualitative systems currently used by the local authority when they undertake parenting programmes. The only variation to how the researcher used these tools, compared to the local authority, was that teachers at Swallow Junior School were also asked to complete the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire (the authority didn't normally request this of teachers). In addition, the researcher devised his own qualitative tool to identify the behaviours the children were presenting in the school. Additional evidence was also gained through semi-structured interviews with the participants via pre and post- test interviews, and the two course leaders were interviewed post-test. The Acting Headteacher was also interviewed in order to examine the impact of policy changes and austerity cuts.

### **The impact of policy changes at a national and local level and austerity cuts on the delivery of parenting programmes at the school**

Any changes at national and local level regarding policy decisions regarding parenting programmes were not having an impact at a school level, as the school was still able to access courses through the local authority. In addition, when the interview with the Acting Headteacher of Swallow Junior School was undertaken (July 2011), there had been little impact on school finances due to austerity cuts. What the school had seen was a reduction in some of the services that the school used to access for troubled families. Barnardos had lost their 'contract' with the local authority to provide 'safe speak' (a counselling service) and in-home support. In addition, the local Children's Centre had reverted to its key demographic (children under the age of 5), and was no longer supporting pupils of junior school age. The school was in receipt of Pupil Premium and was using this to fund its Child and Parent Support Officer, who was supporting families.

### **The impact the programme had on the parents undertaking the parenting programme at Swallow Junior School**

The two families tracked for this study were 'Timothy' and 'Jeremy' and their mothers. Timothy is a 9-year-old male pupil in a Year 4 class of 26 pupils, taught by the school's Deputy Headteacher. Timothy has been in receipt of a statement of educational need since he was in Year 2, and currently receives 15 hours of teaching assistant support (3 hours per morning); his statement is for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. He lives with his mother, stepfather and five brothers. Jeremy is an eight-year-old pupil in a Year 3 class of 32 pupils. On commencement of the course, he was taught by a member of staff whom the Executive Headteacher had concerns regarding their performance; on completion of

the programme the staff member was on long-term sick leave, following being placed in 'competency procedures'. Jeremy lives with his biological parents, although when Jeremy was three years old his parents split for six months and mother stated that this had affected his behaviour. Jeremy's twelve year-old brother, James, lives with the family. The family recently moved to the area; Jeremy's previous school had identified that he had behaviour problems and an educational psychologist in that authority had observed him. Although his teacher reported few concerns, the school's Behaviour Assistant and members of the Senior Leadership Team had significant concerns, leading to Jeremy receiving two fixed-term exclusions and numerous 'visits' to the school's in-house exclusion room. His behaviours in school included being aggressive towards other pupils, refusal to work and often damaging property within the classroom (on one occasion the researcher witnessed him throwing all the books off a book shelf).

Timothy's mother and teacher completed the Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire before commencement of the programme and repeated this during the last week of the programme. As stated in Chapter 3 the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire allows the researcher to examine a child's behaviour against a selection of 'norms'. The results of the questionnaire were:

Assessment	Score
Pre-test teacher assessment	33
Post-test teacher assessment	23
Pre-test parent assessment	27
Post-test parent assessment	26

**Table 4.1: Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire scores for 'overall stress' for Timothy**

All of Timothy's scores fell within the 'abnormal' range at both the pre-test and post-test stages. Timothy's behaviour would therefore fall within a band that equates to only 5% of the population, suggesting that Timothy's behaviour is likely to be within the 'clinical-range' for behavioural difficulties. The Strengths and Difficulties data supplied by Timothy's mother before commencement of the parenting programme, points to a child with very high levels of stress and behavioural difficulties, with slightly raised hyperactivity and attentional difficulties. It also suggests that Timothy is not necessarily kind or helpful, and has some difficulties getting on with other children. In most areas Timothy's class teacher concurs with mother's opinions, although at a higher level of concern. The teacher questionnaire results indicate a significant improvement in behaviour post-test, whereas mother indicates virtually no change in his behaviour.

The 'Parenting Scale' questionnaire gives the researcher data that points to the style of parenting that the parent is employing; the data gives insight into how lax, or over-reactive a parent is when dealing with their child's behaviour, and how hostile they are towards their child. The results for Timothy's mother were:

Indicator	Score	Comparison
Laxness	1.6	Close to average
Over-reactivity	2.2	Close to average
Hostility	1.0	Close to average
Total	2.6	Close to average

**Table 4.2: Parent Scale questionnaire scores for Timothy's mother (pre-test)**

Indicator	Score	Comparison
Laxness	2.6	Close to average
Over-reactivity	3.2	Close to average
Hostility	1.0	Close to average
Total	2.8	Close to average

**Table 4.3: Parent Scale questionnaire scores for Timothy's mother (post-test)**

The Parent Scale scores identify that Timothy's mother had parenting strategies which fell within the 'normal-range' on commencement of the course, and that there was very little change on completion. The fact that mother has only indicated a small variation between pre test and post test results, may be a result of the support mother had already received before she commenced the course (from Sure Start and Barnardos), and therefore she may already have had strategies in place.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale was utilised by the researcher to examine the mental well-being of the children's mothers. As shown in the Literature Review, parenting programmes have been shown to impact positively on the mother's mental health. The mean for the scale is 50.7 (for females it is 50.3) (Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed, 2008). The scores for Timothy's mother are shown in table 4.4.

Test	Score
Timothy pre-test	51
Timothy post-test	48

**Table 4.4: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale questionnaire scores for Timothy's mother**

This data therefore suggests that the mental well-being of Timothy's mother was not a cause for concern on commencement of the programme, but there had been a slight deterioration by the end of the course.

### **Post-test semi-structured interview with Timothy's mother**

Although mother discussed the parenting programme in very positive terms with the researcher, it was difficult to elicit from her interview what she had gained from attending the course. Mother reiterated that before the course commenced she had already implemented strategies to improve Timothy's behaviour, such as establishing routines, but implied that she had been more consistent in implementing these during the course. Mother did state that she thought that there had been some improvement in her relationship with Timothy.

### **Post-test semi-structured interview with course facilitators regarding Timothy's mother**

With regards to Timothy's mother, the facilitators thought that the biggest breakthrough was getting her to realise that Timothy's destiny wasn't pre-assigned, due to him being labelled as having a 'conduct disorder' by CAMHS. The facilitators were concerned at mother's fatalistic response to the 'diagnosis' of conduct disorder; mother informed the facilitators that Timothy's 'destiny' was to be a criminal by the age of thirty. When the facilitators explored this with her, it appears that she had been told this by a clinician in response to her asking what the worst-case scenario would be for Timothy. The Educational Psychologist did state that the guidance given by CAMHS is sometimes 'counter' to that provided through the

parenting programme, and referred to this as an ‘uphill-battle’. As an Educational Psychologist, the facilitator stated that once parents have been given a label, such as ADHD or Conduct Disorder, they refer to their children, “*as if they’ve got cancer or something*”, implying that parents perceive there is nothing that can be done to improve the situation. The facilitators had tried to reinforce to Timothy’s mother that she needed to see beyond the label and deal with the behaviour that he presented with.

Jeremy’s mother completed the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire before commencement on the course, and during the last week of the course. Jeremy’s class teacher completed the questionnaire before commencement of the course; at the end of the course the teacher was absent from the school and therefore the school’s Acting Deputy Headteacher completed this questionnaire.

Assessment	Score
Pre-test teacher assessment	23
Post-test teacher assessment	12
Pre-test parent assessment	35
Post-test parent assessment	16

**Table 4.5: Goodman’s Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire scores for ‘overall stress’ for Jeremy**

Jeremy’s Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire assessments point to a child within the ‘abnormal’ range on commencement of the course, but only in the ‘borderline’ category on completion. On commencement of the programme his mother’s data suggests that Jeremy was suffering from very high levels of behavioural, hyperactivity and attentional difficulties. On completion of the course



mother's data suggested that Jeremy's hyperactivity and attentional difficulties were now 'close to average' and his behavioural difficulties were only 'slightly raised'. His teacher post-assessment data points to a child close to average in all areas, with the exception of '*difficulties getting along with other children*', which was just slightly raised; this indicates a significant improvement from the pre-test teacher assessment.

Jeremy's mother's Parent Scale statistics pre and post-test were as follows:

**Pre-test Jeremy**

Indicator	Score	Comparison
Laxness	5.0	Above average
Over-reactivity	3.2	Close to average
Hostility	1.3	Close to average
Total	3.6	Above average

**Table 4.6: Parent Scale questionnaire scores for Jeremy's mother (pre-test)**

**Post-test Jeremy**

Indicator	Score	Comparison
Laxness	2.6	Close to average
Over-reactivity	2.0	Close to average
Hostility	1.0	Close to average
Total	2.6	Close to average

**Table 4.7: Parent Scale questionnaire scores for Jeremy's mother (post-test)**

The data for Jeremy's mother points to a parent who was very 'lax' in her behaviour management strategies at the onset of the course, this could be as a result of mother 'turning-a-blind-eye' to difficulties, or just not having the strategies to deal with the behaviours that Jeremy was presenting with. On completion of the course

there had been a significant decrease in her 'laxness' score – pointing to a mother who was now using a wider range of strategies to deal with her son's behaviour. The indicators for over-reactivity and hostility also show an improvement during the period of the course.

Jeremy's mother also completed the Well-Being questionnaire pre and post-test with the following results:

Test	Score
Jeremy pre-test	45
Jeremy post-test	59

**Table 4.8: Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale questionnaire scores for Jeremy's mother**

This data therefore suggests that mother's mental well-being was a cause for concern on commencement of the programme, but there had been a significant improvement by the end of the course.

#### **Post-test semi-structured interview with Jeremy's mother**

Mother reiterated that she had been apprehensive about participating in the course, but she had enjoyed the process, especially the group aspect. Mother stated that as a result of the course she had come to realise that she had been giving too much attention to Jeremy, as a result of dealing with his negative behaviour at school. Mother had therefore started to give more attention to her other son, which she said had worked out well for him. The course had also allowed her to realise that she didn't need to punish Jeremy at home for behaviours exhibited at school; instead

mother had built in quality time at bedtime (when they would read together and discuss issues at school). Although it was still early days, mother thought there had been an improvement in her relationship with Jeremy. Mother stated that the children still treated her differently to their father, but said that they only see their father at the weekends due to the long hours he works. She said her husband had been supportive of her attending the course, which had surprised her:

“I thought that he might object to it actually, or he might say, ‘it’s a waste of time’, but he’s not. He’s actually let me get on with it.”

(Mother of Jeremy)

#### **Post-test semi-structured interview with course facilitators regarding Jeremy’s mother**

The facilitators confirmed what mother had stated to the researcher in her post-test interview i.e. the course had allowed her to reach an understanding that she had been giving too much attention to Jeremy, and that this had impacted on his brother, James; apparently mother also helped father to accept this. The facilitators thought that mum was too conscious of how others were perceiving her parenting of Jeremy, and that the course had allowed her to relax, and not to worry about others’ perceptions. The facilitators thought that the approaches to parenting from mother and father were quite different; they confirmed that father’s approach was “*authoritarian*” and they thought the course would have benefited him. At the start of the course mother had also given the impression to the facilitators that there were no particular behaviour issues at home, but during the course she had become more realistic and accepted that they could improve their parenting to benefit Jeremy.

## **The impact of the programme on the children's behaviour in school**

In order to further evaluate the impact of the parenting programme, from a school perspective, the researcher developed his own behaviour questionnaire for staff to complete (see appendix B). The questionnaire was used differently to the other measurement tools, as it was completed before commencement of the course, and then, rather than immediately after completion of the course, the post-test assessment was undertaken in November 2012 – approximately sixteen months after the parents finished the course. The aim of this gap in time was to allow the researcher to evaluate if any short-term gains in pupil behaviour were retained over a longer period of time.

### **Timothy - behaviours on commencement of the course**

Timothy's class teacher identified the following behaviours occurring on a daily basis before mother commenced the course:

- Leaving the classroom without permission
- Talking over the teacher
- Interrupting others
- Wandering around the classroom
- Not standing still when the end of break bell rang
- Not lining-up at the end of break / lunchtime
- Deliberately not following teacher instructions

In addition the following behaviours were occurring on at least a weekly basis:

- Task avoidance
- Disrupting others

- 'Back-chatting'
- Stealing

### **Timothy – behaviours sixteen months after the course**

In the post-test assessment in November 2012 Timothy was exhibiting none of the above behaviours on either a daily or weekly basis. His teacher indicated no new behaviour concerns regarding his behaviour.

### **Jeremy - behaviours on commencement of the course**

Jeremy's class teacher identified the following behaviours occurring on a daily basis before commencement on the course:

- Talking over the teacher

In addition she stated the following behaviours were occurring on at least a weekly basis:

- Interrupting others
- Physically assaulting other children
- Deliberately not following teacher instructions

As can be seen, the teacher reported only minimal behaviour issues, despite the concerns raised by other professionals (as discussed earlier).

### **Jeremy – behaviours sixteen months after the course**

The second assessment in November 2012 showed a significant deterioration in Jeremy's behaviour from April 2011. In the post-test assessment he was exhibiting the following behaviours in school on a daily basis:

- Task avoidance
- Disrupting others
- Talking over the teacher
- Interrupting others
- Back-chatting
- Extreme rudeness
- Using bad language
- Deliberately not following instructions

In addition the following behaviours were witnessed on a weekly basis:

- Refusal to complete tasks
- Wandering around the classroom
- Physically assaulting other children
- Bullying
- Using an object as a weapon
- Spoiling other's belongings
- Not lining up

Timothy's behaviour in school showed a marked improvement at the sixteen-month review, In contrast, for Jeremy there had been a significant increase in his reported negative behaviours at school. If the data correctly reflects the situation, the SDQ would suggest that there was an improvement in Jeremy's behaviour immediately after his mother had completed the course, but these improvements had not been maintained long-term. It should be remembered that for both pupils the teacher

assessing the behaviour at post-test was different to that at pre-test; therefore the teacher's perspectives of what constitutes poor behaviour may be different.

### **Issues regarding holding a parenting programme in a school setting**

The most significant issue regarding holding the parenting programme at the school related to recruiting parents to attend the programme. Despite the programme being available to all parents only two completed the course; if the local Children's Centre had not been able to recruit an additional eight parents to attend the programme it would have had to be cancelled, as a minimum of ten parents were required to hold the course.

The facilitators raised an unexpected negative aspect of holding the course in school. The room used by the facilitators backed-on to an occasional teaching area. During one of their sessions the participants heard Timothy's teacher shouting at her class, referred to as a 'temper-tantrum' by one of the facilitators, and included the teacher throwing something down. The facilitator stated the teacher's behaviour contradicted the messages on the course about how parents should deal with their children's behaviour.

Another issued raised by the facilitators was the school's Child and Parent Support Officer (CPSO) participation in the sessions with parents; her attendance had been requested by the Executive Headteacher in order to allow the CPSO to develop a relationship with these parents and support them between sessions. The facilitators asked that she did not attend sessions after the first session as they thought

parents might perceive her to be a 'spy-in-the-ranks'. As a result there was no link between the school and the course – if the Executive Headteacher, as researcher, had not met the facilitators at the end of the course there would have been no feedback on the course regarding the impact or issues raised by parents. This makes working effectively with families in a multi-agency approach difficult in this instance.

## **Summary of findings for the two pupils in the fieldwork**

### **Summary of findings for Timothy**

The Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire from Timothy's teachers show a significant improvement in his behaviour during the period of the course. Timothy's mother though indicates very little change in behaviour from the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire. The Parent Scale results equally show very little change, probably because mother already had strategies in place for dealing with Timothy's behaviour (although they may not previously had impact). The Warwick - Edinburgh Mental Well-Being data for Timothy's mother showed a slight deterioration in mother's mental health during the course of the programme.

The semi-structured interviews with mother indicate that she found the course beneficial and that she thought she had been more consistent in implementing strategies. She thought there had been some improvement in her relationship with Timothy. The facilitators reflected that they thought the course had helped mother to change her perceptions regarding the long-term outlook for Timothy.



### **Summary of findings for Jeremy**

Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties questionnaire showed a significant improvement in Jeremy's behaviour when assessed by both his mother and teachers – in fact he moved from 'abnormal' to 'borderline'. This being said, the sixteen-month teacher rating assessment showed a significant deterioration in his behaviour. The Parent Scale assessments that mother completed show an improvement in all three areas assessed, but especially for 'laxness', which moved from 'above average' to 'close to average'. The Warwick-Edinburgh assessment suggests that mother's mental well-being may have significantly improved during the course of the parenting programme.

The researcher's post-test interview with Jeremy's mother indicated that she was now less harsh at home with Jeremy regarding his behaviours at school, and she had built in quality time at bedtime; this she thought had started to improve her relationship with Jeremy. More significantly, she thought the course had allowed her to devote more time to her other son; the facilitators concurred with this.

The findings for Timothy and Jeremy therefore suggest a variation in the impact of the programme for both families. The data suggests that there was an improvement in the child / parent relationship for both pupils; the evidence around the impact on pupil behaviour at the school was inconclusive as the short-term measures showed success where as the longer term analysis for Jeremy points to a decline in his behaviour.

## Parental perceptions of parenting programmes

The researcher sent a flyer to the parents of all children registered at Swallow Junior School inviting them to attend a parenting programme at the school. As no parents responded to this invite the researcher wanted to garner parents' perceptions of parenting programmes, and to discover why parents may not have enrolled to attend the course. The questionnaires were sent home with all 260 children on roll (equating to 229 different families). Of the possible 229 possible returns only 29 responded, equating to 11.1% of families. The response to this questionnaire was not dissimilar to a questionnaire sent to parents asking for their opinions on homework a few months earlier. Results of the questionnaire are presented in appendix F.

### **Summary of findings regarding parental perceptions of parenting programmes drawn from the parent questionnaire**

It would appear that sending a flyer to all parents at a school may not be the most effective way of recruiting parents, as many parents did not receive the communication. In addition, some parents may have been put-off from attending by calling the course a parenting programme, and for some more information was required before they could make a decision. Most parents were unable to attend the course due to the time it was held, as they were working. Therefore parents would prefer to see the course held mostly after 6:00pm.

Parental perceptions of parenting courses seemed positive – with the majority of respondents recognising that courses were for all parents, and not dependent on

the level of negative behaviour their child exhibited. Parents also thought holding programmes were a good use of local authority and school resources.

## Chapter 5 – Conclusions and recommendations

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to reflect not only on the findings of the research, but also the process that the researcher went through. This chapter aims to answer the key research questions raised in chapter one, namely:

What understanding of parenting programmes can be gained through delivering a parenting programme in a mainstream school?

This central question led to the following sub-questions:

- What is the impact of national and local policy decisions regarding parenting programmes on the delivery of programmes in schools?
- What impact do parenting programmes have on a child's behaviour, both at home and in the school setting?
- What are the perceptions parents have of parenting programmes?

The researcher undertook the study because he believed that by tackling poor parenting the behaviour of pupils at his school, Swallow Junior School, would improve. As outlined in chapter 3, it was decided that as this study was a piece of practitioner-based research a pragmatic approach would be used to paradigm development. The research design that the researcher used was a mixed-methods approach allowing the researcher to employ both qualitative and quantitative measures, with the data collected concurrently and treated in equal measure as per the triangulation design. Following a consideration of ethnographic and case study

approaches a case study approach was used, using the instrumental model cited by Wellington (2000).

## The findings of the research

What understanding of parenting programmes was gained through the study?

### **The impact of national and local policies on the delivery of parenting programmes**

As stated, the researcher was keen to examine the influences currently impacting upon policy towards parenting programmes. The researcher found that since the election of the Coalition Government in 2010 there has been a continued focus on the need to support families, led by empirical research, but there has been a distinct change in policy direction regarding how this support should be delivered. On the one-hand there is the reactive '*firm-gripping*' of '*troubled-families*' approached discussed by Casey (2012); and on the other-hand there is the move to preventative support for all families through the 'Can Parent' programme. Voluntary organisations, as well as state and commercial providers are being encouraged to deliver programmes – this fits with David Cameron's personal mission, to utilise the voluntary sector, as part of the 'Big Society' movement, and is a move away from state organisations, such as Sure Start being a main provider of programmes. In addition, the Coalition is keen to use market-forces to impact on the quality of provision. At the same time, the government appears to be moving away from the model that the Labour government had, namely, that schools should be providing a significant amount of the support to families. There is no longer an expectation that all schools will support families; instead the Secretary of State's philosophy is that

schools are best placed to make decisions regarding the needs of their community, and therefore he no longer 'ring-fences' money for schools to support families through the 'Extended Schools' initiative; a decision reinforced by the changes in school inspections by Ofsted.

The 'Can Parent' pilot aims to deliver parenting programmes to a universal-population sample. The previous government's policy was to focus delivery of parenting-programmes to parents where concerns had been raised regarding their parenting / children's behaviour i.e. a reactionary approach; whereas the 'Can Parent' approach is more preventative, offering programmes to all parents in order to negate future problems. As was shown in the Literature Review, there is little quantifiable evidence to conclude that universal parenting programmes are effective in universal population samples for children with 'normal-range' behaviours, although there is some qualitative evidence showing success.

At a local level, it was clear that parenting programmes were on elected-members' 'radar', and that they were keen to support the 'Can Parent' scheme, this may not be surprising given that the local authority in which Swallow Junior School served was a Conservative administration. The research highlighted though that each provider would only be funded £100 per family to deliver the 'Can Parent' scheme. Therefore in the authority examined the model submitted by them to the Department for Education for delivering the 'Can Parent' scheme was a 'stripped-back' programme containing only three sessions. It will be interesting to see what impact

such a limited amount of support will have, especially for those parents who have multiple needs.

This research was undertaken during the austerity cuts, and therefore the researcher examined if these cuts were having an impact on the delivery of parenting programmes. Cuts appear to be currently limited in their impact; in fact during the period of this research the Department for Education committed significant funding to develop the 'Can Parent' scheme (although the researcher was unable to identify the exact costing for this). Some austerity cuts had occurred; the 'much-heralded' National Academy for Parenting Research seems to have been an early 'victim' of these cuts, with implications for further research into the effectiveness of parenting programmes in the country. Although the Coalition Government has stated a commitment to not reduce school budgets, what it has done is to change the way that it funds schools. As a result 'extended services' funding has ceased, which marks a significant change in government policy from that of Labour. Although the government may not have a plan to withdraw parenting programmes from schools, their policy of withdrawing ring-fenced 'extended services' funding, combined with Ofsted's decision to no longer judge schools on how they support parents, may unwittingly have this consequence.

At a local authority level, the main financial cut back was related to the withdrawal of taxi services for parents to attend classes out of their area. Although this may seem a saving with relative few consequences, the reality in a rural authority is that it could prevent attendance. For example, the area served by the researcher's main

school, Treeside Junior School, rarely has parenting programmes delivered. If taxis were withdrawn parents would have to access programmes by public transport, this would entail them catching two buses to the nearest town that provides these; this journey to sessions would take approximately two hours each way. This is therefore likely to restrict attendance, and highlights the issue of 'rural-poverty' of services.

### **Was impact did the parenting programme in the fieldwork have on the child's behaviour both in school and at home?**

As stated in the literature review, finding '*constant conjunction*' between the application of a parenting programme and 'success' is almost impossible (Smith and Pugh, 1996). To answer this question each of the data sets was examined individually before coming to an overall judgement of the effectiveness of the programme. It should be remembered that one of the key questions this research hoped to answer was concerning the impact a parenting programme can have on pupils' behaviour in the school setting. Given that only two parents agreed to participate in the programmes, drawing generalisations would be impossible. What the data does show is that during the sixteen months from the start of the course to the post-test teacher assessment of behaviour there had been a significant improvement in Timothy's behaviour at the school; whereas, during the same period Jeremy's behaviour showed a marked deterioration. In the home setting both parents reported some improvements.

### **Parents' perceptions of parenting programmes**

In the questionnaire distributed to parents at Swallow Junior School, parents showed an overwhelming support for local authorities and schools to be undertaking parenting programmes. Given the current financial climate, it might have been



expected that parents would consider parenting programmes an area for possible cutbacks, but this was not the case; 75% of parents thought local authorities should fund programmes, and 65.2% thought schools should commit their own funds to these if the authority was to withdraw funding.

Parents had a very holistic view of parenting programmes, with 68% stating they felt parenting programmes were for all parents, and not just those with issues regarding their child's behaviour or relationship issues. Despite the positive perception of programmes by parents only two parents attended the programme when held at Swallow Junior School. Through examination of the questionnaire the main reason for this appears to be the timing of the programme, but other factors were important and these will be discussed further in the section 'should schools run parenting programme?'

## The effectiveness of the methods used in this research

Thomas (2011) claims that:

"The case study method is a kind of research that concentrates on one thing, looking at it in detail, not seeking to generalise from it. When you do a case study, you are interested in that thing in itself, as a whole." (p3)

The researcher has not tried to make wider claims regarding the learning that was discovered from this research, but has tried to identify the knowledge that was gained around parenting programmes when delivered in this one school, on one occasion. As shown in the above section, the researcher was able to bring meaning to the programme at Swallow Junior School, analysing the impact on the two

parents and two pupils, examining the impact of policy decisions, including austerity cuts on the delivery of programmes at the school, and giving one group of parents' perceptions on parenting programmes. It is hoped that this case study will add to the '*building blocks*' in developing further understanding at a national level of parenting programmes, when delivered in mainstream school settings.

A major concern with this research was always going to be the potential conflict between the researcher being a 'practitioner' / 'insider' researcher whilst at the same time being the Executive Headteacher at the school. Reflecting back to the strengths and weaknesses of practitioner research, as identified by Wellington (2000), as illustrated in table 3.3 (Chapter 3) a significant advantage of this approach was that it allowed the researcher 'easier access' – not only to the sample but also to policy makers (given the researcher's position as a headteacher). Familiarity also made it easier for parents to meet with the researcher, but as shown in table 3.3, 'familiarity' can be a weakness in practitioner research as well as strength. In this case this familiarity may have resulted in a conflict of interest for both staff and parents participating in the research.

With regards to the conflict of interest concerning staff this became apparent from the teacher ratings of pupils' behaviour. At the time of the research the researcher, in his role as Executive Headteacher, had raised concerns regarding the quality of teaching by Jeremy's teacher, including her behaviour management techniques. At this time Jeremy was exhibiting significant behaviour problems both in the classroom and on the playground, yet when the teacher completed her ratings of his

behaviour most behaviours were described as taking place either '*occasionally*' or '*never*' (rather than daily or weekly). This description of his behaviour certainly did not concur with that of the Senior Leadership Team or the Behaviour Assistants. The researcher therefore implied from this positive reflection of Jeremy's behaviour by his teacher that she was trying to portray a positive impression of her behaviour management in the classroom.

The potential conflict of interest between the parents on the study and the researcher was highlighted when the father of Jeremy was reported to Social Care by the school part way through the parenting course; Social Care were asked to undertake an investigation after it came to light that Jeremy's father had put chilli-powder in his mouth as a punishment for swearing. During the post-test interview, and in completion of the questionnaires used, it was not in the interest of Jeremy's mother to paint a negative impression of their parenting of Jeremy. When undertaking practitioner-research this case highlights the difficulty some parents might have in opening-up to the researcher when they also have a duty of care to act on any care issues.

Another negative aspect of being an 'insider researcher' occurred when the researcher ceased being Executive Headteacher of the school. What had been a 'convenience-sample' was no longer 'convenient'. The researcher endeavoured to continue to access the parents for on-going interviews and analysis to examine any continued impact of the programme but the parents were no longer willing to participate in further research. It maybe that the parents felt 'obliged' to participate

when the researcher was Executive Headteacher but felt their obligations finished when he left the school.

It was the intention of the researcher to act as ‘naturalistic observer’, i.e. to neither manipulate nor stimulate the behaviour of those observed (Punch, 2009). The researcher feels that this was the case but the researcher’s methods were called into question by the facilitators of the course for two reasons. Firstly, one parent from Swallow Junior School attended the first week of the course, but then failed to attend any subsequent meetings. The facilitators thought the Executive Headteacher was putting too much pressure on this parent. One of the facilitators stated:

“...she didn’t want to come. She was being persuaded to come and she didn’t want to.”

(Facilitator – Educational Psychologist)

Secondly, the facilitators were concerned that the school’s Child and Parent Support Officer had sat in during the first week of the course; their previous experience was that this could restrict parents in speaking openly. The researcher had asked her to attend the first session in order to build up relationships with the Swallow Junior School parents who were in attendance, so that she could support them between sessions and following completion of the course; in addition he originally planned to interview the Child and Parent Support Officer on completion of the course in order to elicit further evidence regarding the journey that the parents had been on. The facilitators had asked her not to attend after the first session – this withdrew the only link between the course and the school, it also withdrew a source of evidence for the researcher.

In the methodology chapter, the issue of '*mortality*' was raised (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; and Cook and Campbell (1979) cited by Robson, 2002). Initially, the concern of the researcher was that pupils might leave the school during the research, therefore causing 'mortality'. Although this did not occur, what did take place was that one of the members of staff who originally completed the SDQ was absent for the post-test assessment, and when the sixteen-month review of school behaviour was undertaken both pupils had moved-up a year and therefore did not have the same teacher. It may be therefore that the new teachers who completed assessments had:

- a) different behaviour management techniques that may have impacted positively or negatively on the pupils' behaviour;
- b) 'thresholds' for what constituted negative behaviour may have been different.

## Limitations of the research

As stated in the methodology chapter, the fieldwork was a case study and therefore issues regarding generalisability are not as acute as they would have been if it had been decided to undertake an ethnographic study. Nevertheless it is important that consideration is given to the limitations of the study. It should be remembered that the researcher was working alone, as a part-time researcher on this study and therefore comparisons with some of the larger studies is not useful. As the fieldwork at Swallow Junior School was so small scale the findings may only be attributed to those parents and any findings may not be transferable. Therefore the voices of policy makers were included in order that other researchers / headteachers would

be able to use this research as a starting point for their own journeys regarding parenting programmes in mainstream school settings.

## Conclusions, recommendations and implications for further research

In chapter 1 I considered whether poor parenting was the root cause of poor behaviour. The literature review and fieldwork study has led me to reassess this belief. I now consider that, as stated by Barlow, Shaw & Stewart-Brown (2004), it is the “*unpropitious circumstances*” that lead to poor parenting which are at the heart of poor child behaviour. It is these circumstances that society needs to address. The risk factors identified by Patterson (1982) are present in the families at Swallow Junior School used in the fieldwork in this research. Undertaking this review has reinforced that in reality the parenting programme in itself cannot turn around a pupil’s behaviour in school because the programme does not try to address these fundamental “*unpropitious circumstances*”. Parenting programmes are more likely to have impact in a mainstream school setting if they are used in conjunction with other measures to support the family and the child in developing relationships, both between the child and parent and the parent and school. Webb (2007) advocated that the previous government’s push to improve parenting through the use of parenting programmes could not work in isolation. She argued that, unlike Scandinavian countries, not enough has been done by successive UK governments to promote parenting. It may be the Coalition Government’s move towards universal parenting programmes is a step in the right direction to normalising parenting programmes. The work of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), identified in the literature review, shows how schools can support families to ensure that they more

effectively engage with their children's education e.g. through becoming a governor, supporting homework and undertaking family learning projects.

This thesis set out to answer the following key question:

“What understanding of parenting programmes can be gained through delivering a parenting programme in a mainstream school?”

The understanding has been multi-faceted. Firstly, through interviews with policy makers, the research concluded that national policy was moving from a 'reactionary' to a 'preventative' model of delivering parenting programmes; this was being replicated in the local authority examined within the fieldwork element of the thesis. In addition, funding mechanisms for schools had recently changed when the research was being undertaken, as a result the government had removed the necessity for schools to support families; equally Ofsted was placing less emphasis on this aspect of the work of a school. From the fieldwork at Swallow Junior School, the research highlighted that qualitative data suggested there had been some improvements in the relationship between the two parents and children studied; quantifiable data and evidence for improvements in the children's behaviour at the school was less robust.

Undertaking this research has allowed the researcher to reflect upon some useful recommendations for colleagues who may be considering implementing parenting programmes in their establishments:

- 1) Firstly, consider if the programme could be delivered outside of school hours, therefore allowing more parents to access the programme;
- 2) Examine ways in which fathers can be encouraged to participate;
- 3) Look at the methods for recruiting parents – provide parents with high levels of information about what the course may entail – consider using the internet so that parents can access some of the materials before they make a decision to attend;
- 4) See the programme as a means to supporting the child-parent relationship, rather than improving behaviour in the school. An improvement in this relationship may in the long-term aid behaviour in school but this may be a secondary impact of the programme.
- 5) Ensure staff are well versed in the principles of the parenting programme in order that they can reinforce these methods in front of parents.
- 6) See programmes as one element in an ‘offer’ to parents to support them with their parenting

The thesis has left the researcher with a number of key questions that could be researched further at a later date:

- Given the ‘Can Parent’ programme is using ‘market-forces’ to influence provision, what impact does this approach have?
- Given that the majority of parents who attend parenting programmes are women, how can schools actively recruit fathers to participate in programmes?



- An examination of the impact of the 'Can Parent' project on pupils' behaviour in school.

## Should schools run parenting programmes?

Should schools therefore introduce parenting programmes into their schools? As stated, this research was to develop understanding around parenting programmes, and not to make specific judgements about the effectiveness of such programmes. What the research has pointed to is, that in this study, there was evidence to suggest that parents see parenting programmes as a useful element on a school's menu of supporting both children and families. The two parents who were studied reported some improvements with their relationship with their child and their behaviour at school. The study could not however demonstrate that the programme had a direct impact on the children's behaviour in school. What was very pleasing was the recognition, through the parent questionnaire, that parents do perceive parenting programmes as a 'universal' means of supporting families, and not just for those families experiencing difficulties. Equally, families saw the programmes as a good use of both local authority and school funds. The researcher has shown a continued emphasis placed on developing family life by the Coalition Government; the move to the universal 'Can Parent' scheme marks the start of a potentially fascinating time in the evolution of parenting programmes – this may be the start of an expectation that all parents will receive parenting programmes.

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## Appendix A - Jeremy's mother pre-test interview (uncoded)

### START OF TRANSCRIPT

Facilitator Male: What difference there might be. So firstly, what's your understanding of what the Parenting Program is?

Interviewee: From what I can gather it's to help me work with Jeremy at home which, in the results, can help you guys here, because obviously we don't get what you get.

Facilitator Male: No, right. You don't get...

Interviewee: We don't get anything that you're getting from Jeremy...

[Over speaking]

Interviewee: ...we don't get at home either actually, because he knows his boundaries at home. He will go as far with them, then that's it, they go back up. We'll have the odd thing with him, which everybody has with kids. But what you're experiencing here, we don't experience at home.

Facilitator Male: What are the boundaries? What are his sanctions? If he knows those quite clearly, what are they at home?

Interviewee: It depends on what he's done. Obviously we've got two boys, they push each other to a point where they argue like cat and dog at times, but they know when enough's enough. They're not supposed to hurt each other. It's morning, they get up, they have their breakfast, Jeremy can go to the point where I don't want to eat, I don't want to have breakfast. He'll come to school and he'll be hungry and then he'll go and tell somebody he has not had any breakfast. It's the first I've heard of it until he goes, I didn't have any breakfast this morning. Because James's 12, Jaames [plays] down and he starts [to toddle off] Jeremy goes, has his breakfast while we're getting washed and stuff.

It's only a small house anyway. So he knows he's got to go down, have his breakfast. He knows that he cannot sit and play on consoles. They cannot watch T.V. they cannot go on the computer before school. Jeremy, he's been on it this morning so therefore he's banned from having a console this - to go on it when he comes home from school.

Facilitator Male: That's his punishment, yes.

Interviewee: If they misbehave they'll have the consoles taken off them for a week. It just depends on what things they do. So they think, okay, I'm going to have this done so I'm not going to do it. We have more of that with the oldest, because he's 12 he's now thinking...

[Over speaking]

Facilitator: Starting to [unclear]...

Interviewee: ...yes whereas Jeremy - okay. My dad said something once, that's it I'm doing it because otherwise he'll just go off in a right [huff]. So it just depends on what they do and what they're allowed to get away with basically.

Facilitator Male: Do you know anybody else who has done a parenting program?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator Male: So you've got no idea what it's actually going to entail?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator Male: What are you hoping to get out of it?

Interviewee: I want a better understanding of Jeremy to be fair. To know how to deal with Jeremy when he has his things here. If we can settle it - he's settled down at home anyway, but anything that we can put in place at home that's going to help here, we're all for. We could always do things better, we could do things a lot better than what we're doing now. So that's all going to help. So I'll know how to deal with this better in my way.

Facilitator Male: Are you looking forward to it, the course?

Interviewee: I'm so, so.

Facilitator Male: A bit apprehensive?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator Male: What's making you apprehensive?

Interviewee: Because everything - when you say it's a Parenting Program, it's like okay I'm doing something wrong...

[Over speaking]

Facilitator Male: Did you feel that way when DI got in touch with you with the...

Interviewee: Yes...

Facilitator Female: I've had a couple of feedbacks like that.

Interviewee: It's okay. Obviously with Jeremy's behaviour there is something that obviously we are missing at home, otherwise he wouldn't come here and misbehave here. So it could be something that we're not doing at home, that he goes into school and [throws tantrums] at school.

Facilitator: Nobody around...

Interviewee: Yeah. So there was a lot of things with Jeremy. He won't speak to anybody. If there's a problem you've got no chance, he'll clam up. He won't even speak to us. So if I can get some...

Facilitator Male: What about your other lad, can you speak to him? Is he open with you?

Interviewee: Jeremy or James?

Facilitator Male: James.

Interviewee: James is with us - he's a typical 12 year old. He's very sensitive compared to Jeremy, they're very chalk and cheese. James's sensitive, Jeremy's rough and ready. So Jeremy won't speak to anybody, James will. But then Jeremy and James won't speak to each other.

Facilitator Male: What's the worst behaviour that they do at home?

Interviewee: Jeremy has been through a stage where he was swearing, we've managed to get that under control, we don't get that from him now. There was a stage where Jeremy was getting more attention because obviously with him being a baby, so James was like I want some attention, so I'll start making up stories and blah, blah, blah. So it's just different things at different stages of their lives. They've not done anything particularly really badly. I think the worst Jeremy's done to James, Jeremy did actually throw something at James which cut his head open.

Facilitator Male: Right, okay.

Interviewee: So it's...

Facilitator Male: Have they ever done anything out...

Interviewee: So it's different stages of their lives.

Facilitator Male: ...in the street that they've got into trouble for?

Interviewee: No, because up until now, up until James went to X school, James's never been allowed out. Jeremy is too young to be out on his own. We've always stuck to the fact, if our kids are out, they could be doing anything. They're not old enough to be out, they've not got the responsibility, they've not even got the knowledge in them to be responsible to be out, so it doesn't happen. They are never allowed out, which is one of the things we have with James. Oh I don't get any freedom, well you're 12, come back in a few years.

Facilitator Male: Who else is at home, you've got dad at home? Their dad's at home with them as well?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator Male: What's he like in dealing with their behaviour?

Interviewee: Les's a lot more stricter than me.

Facilitator Male: Is he?

Interviewee: Yes, so as soon as his dad says something, stop or you'll go to bed, or stop or you'll lose something. So that's it, they stop. They tend to push me more.

Facilitator Male: Do they? Do they play you off one and other?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator Male: Yes, that's kids.

Interviewee: Very much so.

Facilitator Male: Does dad work?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator Male: So he couldn't come on the course anyway?

Interviewee: No, he's - we run a business, so obviously...

Facilitator Male: Oh I didn't realise, oh that's really hard then.

Interviewee: Without him going to work - we've not got the money at the moment.

Facilitator Male: So what behaviour do you want Jeremy to have improved by the end, for you at home do you think?

Interviewee: I need Jeremy to open up. At one point in Jeremy's life, me and Les split up for about six months, that did affect them. When Les had them for the weekend, Jeremy would come home and it would take me an entire Sunday afternoon to calm them down.

Facilitator Male: So how old was Jeremy when you split?

Interviewee: Jeremy was only - he'd only be about three.

Facilitator Male: About four years ago.

Interviewee: But it could be something that is still in there. Because he won't speak to us, we don't actually know. So I'm hoping that at the end of this we can actually get some communication going with him. If he's feeling frustrated I need him to speak to somebody, because he doesn't speak to anybody he just blows. I need to know how to deal with Jeremy to get his - it's not his anger, it is frustration. I need to be able to get him to deal with it in different ways. I don't know how to do it so I'm hoping this is going to give me the tools to get him through with it.

Facilitator Male: How often do you see negative behaviour from him at home?

Interviewee: We don't see negative behaviour from him. He does push things at times but generally he comes home and he just goes and plays. He draws, he does go on the consoles at times. Sometimes it'll get to a

point where he's on them everyday and we have to take them off him because he gets fixated. But if he doesn't want to do anything, we can get the whole I don't want to do this. Then it's like, oh I'm not doing this. Then we're getting a battle of the wills thing.

Facilitator Male: Behaviour at school, how would you describe that from the feedback that you get from...

Interviewee: The only [thing] I've had so far since he's been here is it's not good. He's hit people. He's gone under tables. I think he's used bad language. We'd got all that under control before I moved here, because he went through a stage - he's never got on at school ever. He hated school from the moment he started.

Facilitator Male: He's only been here a few months hasn't he?

Interviewee: Yes. We had the same thing at x school. Now they went through the year - different teachers learnt how to control him in different ways. When he left x school to come here, it went off about six months and I'd not heard a thing from them. So they'd actually finally managed to get him under control. He was going to do whatever it was to get his frustration out. I don't know what they were doing with him but...

Facilitator Female: How does he feel now?

Interviewee: ...I was getting less and less and less.

Facilitator Female: How does he feel now about coming to school? Does he say how he feels with coming to school now? Does he like coming to school?

Interviewee: Sometimes he does.

Facilitator Female: Sometimes. Other times he doesn't? You don't have a big battle in the morning getting him to school?

Interviewee: No, he comes to school fine, but then when I pick him up he'll say I'm not going to school tomorrow. I'll say well what's happened today?

Facilitator Female: He enjoys coming [unclear] coming here though doesn't he, he really enjoys that? Yes I think that's worked really well for him hasn't it, that?

Interviewee: Yes. I think he's found it - I mean Jeremy doesn't do change at all, he never has done. He found it really hard to cope when he first came. Within the first week he got hit in the stomach and pushed into the toilet. So immediately he came home and says I want to go back to x school because he'd never experienced that before.

Facilitator Male: So it's a defence mechanism isn't it?

Interviewee: So since that it went downhill for quite a bit. But for about two or three weeks it's gone literally...

Facilitator Male: At home is he the same with not liking change? Can he cope with it at home?

Interviewee: We don't really change things...

[Over speaking]

Facilitator Male: Yes.

Interviewee: But again I don't know whether that was because of me and Les splitting up for a brief time, I don't know.

Facilitator Male: When he was at his last school you said there was some behaviour issues there, was he seen by the educational psychologist?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator Male: Did they come up with any issue that they thought might be causing the behaviour?

Interviewee: They actually said that he was scared of something. When you get to know Jeremy, when you look at Jeremy, you know he's not scared of anything, but there is something that he's not...

Facilitator Male: Has anybody medical been involved to see if there's anything?

Interviewee: No. Because I went to the doctors, I said they were having problems at school, can I be referred to see somebody else, I don't know who I'd need to speak to. She said no, it's basically a school matter.

Facilitator Male: Yes, that's probably to expect.

Interviewee: So we went to the school psychologist, she came out to see him three times. Last time she came out she says no, he doesn't need to be under us at the moment, because he'd completely settled down. But they'd put quite a few bits into place. He had his circle of friends and et cetera. But all the people that he was at school with, he started school with. So he'd got all these friends through the years. Obviously he's come here and he's not known anybody. He's found it hard to make friends, but then that doesn't help with his behaviour.

Facilitator Male: No, sure.

Interviewee: Because if he's going to behave the way he behaves, then nobody is going to want to be friends with him. So it's swings and roundabouts trying to get him to settle down and then things will fall into place afterwards. So that's the main thing.

Facilitator Male: Last couple of things really. I want just to reflect back to when you were a child. How would you describe your parents and how they used to manage your behaviour?

Interviewee: To be honest I was nothing like...

Facilitator Male: You were perfect?

Interviewee: I just literally, because I'd had - my mum was a single parent when she had me and my brother. Then we were sent to live with our father. Then we were sent back to live with our mother when I was 10. So I refused to speak to anybody. So I just went to school and I did what I had to do, go home. I'd always keep myself to myself. So I went withdrawal, so no one ever had any problems with me. My parents aren't fantastic to be fair.

Facilitator Male: I was wondering if you think you parent the same way as your mum parents or differently?

Interviewee: I'd like to think I was a better parent than my mum, because my mum's a - she's - I love my mum, but she's never been...

Facilitator Male: Not that type, no.

Interviewee: ...a fantastic parent. Whereas I get very protective over Jeremy and James and I can't help that and I can't stop it. Whereas Les's...

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

## Jeremy's mother post-test transcript (coded – codes in red)

Facilitator: Obviously you've completed the program now. I spoke to the facilitator this morning, they said you've done really well, they were really pleased with how you've done. How did you feel about the course?

Interviewee: A bit apprehensive to start with but I enjoyed it.

Facilitator: Which bits did you find the most useful?

Interviewee: All of it.

Facilitator: All of it?

Interviewee: Yes. Obviously mixing with the other parents, hearing their stories, it puts it into - that things could be worse. But now we've got tools that I can move forward and put into [change]. **Positive impact of programme**

Facilitator: What in particular? What strategies do you think you'll use the most from the course?

Interviewee: I've actually gone from dealing with just Jeremy, to James as well. It's made me realise that because we're dealing with Jeremy, we tend to forget James. So we're giving James a bit more time, so that's worked out well for him. With Jeremy, a lot of sitting down, explaining, talking to him, not taking too literally everything that goes wrong. The lighter stuff that happens we - okay, this has happened, it's dealt with in school, that's it, fresh day. Rather than it festering and... **Positive impact of programme**

[Over speaking]

Interviewee: ...yes, it was getting to a point where you'd feel sick. You sit and wait for phone calls from school and think, what's happened now. So things are a bit more lighter.

Facilitator: Has your relationship with both the boys improved?

Interviewee: I think so, I think it's getting there. I think there's still a long way to go, but it is getting there. **Positive impact of programme**

Facilitator: What about behaviour at home, any improvement on that front?

Interviewee: James's so-so, I mean James is his attitude, which he's a 12 year old. Jeremy believe it or not, he was never too bad at home.

Facilitator: Yes, you said that last time.

Interviewee: But if I say something, he's learning to do it a bit more quicker. Bedroom tidy, it's starting to happen slowly. So things are starting to change, so that helps. **Positive impact of programme**

Facilitator: Because last time you said about the brothers arguing.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: They still do?

Interviewee: They still argue, not as much. But we've got to a point where - they mainly argue when it's on the computer, so they get a warning, if it carries on, computer goes off, that's it.

Facilitator: Are you being consistent on that?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Good. You said you wanted a better understanding of Jeremy. I think you were concerned about him not opening up to you, concerned about when you'd split from dad in the past.

Interviewee: Yes, at this point in time I don't think that that has affected him too much actually. I think it's mainly everything that goes wrong at school, we were doing it at home. So if he was doing something at school, we would carry the punishment on at home. So it was the case of, it's happened at school, it's happening at home and he was just going round and round and round. Whereas now we've stopped doing it at home, he will sit down and we'll do stories at bedtime and then he will talk to me. If there's anything bothering him, he will talk to me then. So if it's anything at school then I come to the school. **Positive impact of programme**

Facilitator: Great, yes because obviously he's put in different compartments for him now, that's going to be dealt with at school, this will be dealt with at home.

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Good. You talked about him needing some support with dealing with his anger, you wanted to help him with the feeling of his anger. Any progress on that?

Interviewee: That's still an ongoing thing. It's just sorting strategies out and what he can do. If he's feeling frustrated what he can do.

Facilitator: Last time you talked about the fact that they'll push you probably more than dad. Still the case?

Interviewee: That still happens.

Facilitator: Yes, it's not going to happen overnight. A bit of a battle of wills between you and Jeremy? Is that a...

Interviewee: Yes, it's not as much. Still happens, just not as frequently.

Facilitator: Has dad taken on board anything from the course?

Interviewee: To be honest, dad's just being doing it with just me and the boys. Because their dad, with him being at work at eight o'clock, he comes back in eight, nine o'clock, so they're usually ready for bed or have gone up by then anyway. So the only time he really spends with them is at the weekend. It's all fun with dad anyway. But I've been talking to him about it.

Facilitator: He's been supportive of you doing the course?

Interviewee: Yes he's not been too bad, I thought that he might object to it actually, or he might say it's a waste of time but he's not. He's actually let me get on with it.

Facilitator: Okay, good. Any parts of the course that didn't work as well?

Interviewee: No. The whole course, I mean it's giving you tools. There's only one section of the course that just doesn't work with us anyway.

Facilitator: Right, which was that one?

Interviewee: Time out.

Facilitator: Time out, yes.

Interviewee: Don't work with our family at all.

Facilitator: No, [the facilitator more] as a whole though than the group, did they get much out of that section?

Interviewee: Yes, I think that's the only one. Because we've learnt to put quite a few strategies into place.

Facilitator: You enjoyed the group based approach, with a group of parents?



Interviewee: Yes, it's great.

Facilitator: How did you find the videos?

Interviewee: Yes they were quite useful actually.

Facilitator: Yes, they need updating a bit don't they?

Interviewee: They do need a little bit updating, but you can actually see the baseline of what they're trying to get across.

Facilitator: How easy do you find it to talk to other parents?

Interviewee: Easier than I thought it was going to be.

Facilitator: Do you think that was helped by the facilitators?

Interviewee: Yes, they were actually really nice, they were great, because they started it off and then we all got to know each other. So it wasn't as hard as I thought it was going to be.

Facilitator: You felt you could relate to the facilitators and to the others on the course?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Good. What helped most then, the advice from other parents or the work that the facilitator's given?

Interviewee: Both.

Facilitator: Both really helped. Have you received any other help on parenting during the time you've been on the course?

Interviewee: No, because everything else we've had is to do with the school. So I've not received - I had a call from the lady at - oh where was she - something to do with the children's centre. But she said that she doesn't see any reason for her to be coming out to see us. She can't see any problems in the home environment so she said at this point in time I don't physically need her.

Facilitator: Did at any time you feel the need to get in touch with the facilitator between the sessions?

Interviewee: No.

Facilitator: How did you feel about undertaking the course actually in the school?

Interviewee: I thought it was better taking it in the school. Because obviously it helped me, with me being new to the school, so I've got to see a bit more than what I would normally of just taking Jeremy to school and picking him up. So I've got to see a bit more of what goes on. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: A bit more as well.

Interviewee: Yes, I did. I think it helped, it definitely helped me it being here than anywhere else. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Do you think if we did it at the children centre you'd have been more inclined to go or not?

Interviewee: I would have gone but it would have been a case of, I've got to go to do this today. Whereas it's been, I'll see you at school. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Yes, I suppose because you bring him here in the morning anyway, it's easy then just to drop him off and stay.

Interviewee: Yes. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Obviously, you have just met with DI, has she been supporting you as well?

Interviewee: Yes.

Facilitator: Would you have preferred it to be a member of school staff who did the course, or not? Because at the moment those staff aren't school staff.

Interviewee: No, I think they did a pretty good job. They knew what they was talking about, they knew exactly how to put it across. I don't think it being a school staff member would've been any different. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Do you think if it was the school staff you might've been a bit more careful about what you said or a bit more wary?

Interviewee: No. Since we've been here we have had an incident with Jeremy saying something which has been taken further anyway. But we've always said we've got nothing to hide. So no, I don't think it would matter too much to be honest. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Would you recommend the course to anybody else?

Interviewee: Yes, [unclear] parent.

Facilitator: I might come back to you for more of that. Would you take another parenting program afterwards? Like an extension to this, would you...

Interviewee: Yes, I think if there was something to follow on from this. But they've given me this stuff which go for the college, for the - is it an OCN thing?

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: So I'm going to do that as well. I'm going to put all that together because that would help me so...

Facilitator: The accreditation, yes. Great, thank you, that's it.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

## Appendix B – the researcher’s self developed pupil behaviour questionnaire for staff

Behaviour review – April 2011

Name of teacher:

Date:

Name of child:

Type of behaviour	How regularly do you see this behaviour from the child?			
	Daily	Weekly	Occasionally	Never
Leaving the classroom				
Leaving the premises				
Refusal to complete task				
Task avoidance				
Disrupting others				
Talking over the teacher				
Interrupting others				
Wandering around the classroom				
Back chatting				
Extreme rudeness				
Using bad language				
Physical assault on a member of staff				
Physical assault against another child				
Spitting				
Racist remarks				
Bullying				
Vandalism				
Stealing				
Using any objects as a weapon				
Climbing on furniture				
Spoiling people’s belongings				
Running in corridors				
Homophobic remarks				
Not standing still when the bells goes				
Not lining up				
Deliberately not following instructions				

## Appendix C – Goodman’s Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

	Not true	Somewhat true	Certainly true
Considerate of other people’s feelings			
Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches and sickness			
Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc.)			
Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
Rather solitary, tends to play alone			
Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
Many worries, often seems worried			
Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
Has at least one good friend			
Often fights with other children or bullies them			
Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful			
Generally liked by other children			
Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence			
Kind to younger children			
Often lies or cheats			
Picked on or bullied by other children			
Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers and other children)			
Thinks things out before acting			
Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
Gets on better with adults than with children			
Many fears, easily scared			
Sees tasks through to the end, good attention span			

## Appendix D - Parental Stress Scale

The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your child or children typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

1	I am happy in my role as a parent	
2	There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary.	
3	Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.	
4	I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren).	
5	I feel close to my child(ren).	
6	I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).	
7	My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.	
8	Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future.	
9	The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren).	
10	Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.	
11	Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.	
12	It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).	
13	The behaviour of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.	
14	If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have child(ren).	
15	I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.	
16	Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.	
17	I am satisfied as a parent	
18	I find my child(ren) enjoyable	

## Appendix E -The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks

STATEMENTS	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been feeling interested in other people					
I've had energy to spare					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling good about myself					
I've been feeling close to other people					
I've been feeling confident					
I've been able to make up my own mind about things					
I've been feeling loved					
I've been interested in new things					
I've been feeling cheerful					

## **Appendix F - Results of the parent questionnaire sent out to all parents of children at Swallow Junior School**

### **Question 1. Parents were asked if they had received the original invite to attend the parenting programme**

26 parents responded to this question:

- 8 hadn't received the original flyer regarding the programme (30.7%)
- 18 parents received the flyer but made a decision not to attend (69.2%)

### **Question 2. Parents were asked if the timing of the parenting programme was convenient for them (the programme was held on Tuesdays 9:00 – 11:30am)**

All 24 of the parents who responded to this question stated that the time was not convenient to them.

### **Question 3. Parents were asked what their preferred time for parenting programmes would be**

16 parents responded to this question (four parents gave more than one response to this question). Their preferred times for a course to be held were:

- Afternoons – 3 parents
- Straight after school - 5 parents
- Evenings (after 6pm) – 11 parents
- Saturdays – 2 parents

### **Question 4. Reasons parents gave for not attending the parenting programme**

26 parents responded to this question (sixteen gave more than one response to this question):

- Childcare prevented attendance – 5 parents
- Being a working parent – 19 parents
- Parent didn't like the thought of group sessions – 1 parent
- Parent didn't feel that they had a problem with their relationship with the child – 16 parents
- Their child doesn't have behaviour issues – 10 parents
- They have already undertaken a parenting programme – 2 parents
- The parent would not undertake a programme in a school setting – 0 parents

**Question 5. Parents were asked if they knew anyone who had attended a parenting programme?**

25 parents responded to this question:

- 19 stated that they didn't (76%)
- 6 parents said that they did (24%)

**Question 6. Parents were asked to reflect that if they did know someone who had taken part in a programme what was their experience**

The 6 parents who stated that they knew someone who had attended a programme:

- 4 stated that it was a positive experience (66%)
- 2 stated that it was a negative experience for them (33%)

**Question 7. Parents were asked to reflect on which group of parents they thought parenting programmes were for**



25 parents responded to this question (9 gave more than one response):

- 17 parents stated parenting programmes were for all parents
- 10 parents thought programmes were for parents whose children have minor behaviour / relationship issues
- 9 parents believed programmes are for parents whose children have severe behaviour / relationship issues

**Question 8. Parents were asked if local authorities should fund programmes in schools**

24 parents responded to this question:

- 18 stated that they should (75%)
- 6 stated that they shouldn't (25%).

**Question 9. Parents were asked to reflect on whether schools should fund programmes if resources from the LA were removed**

23 parents responded to this question:

- 15 stated 'yes' (65.2%)
- 8 stated 'no' (34.7%)

In addition, parents were given an opportunity to make additional comments; thirteen took up the offer to add comments. Below are quotes taken from these questionnaires, where the researcher feels their comments add to the field of knowledge:

1) Unfortunately my shift rotations are not flexible enough to allow me to plan any great length of time ahead; however if I felt the programme necessary I could raise it as a serious issue at work and adjust my shifts accordingly, but there would be a significant financial penalty.

2) The school should only fund such programmes if they can organise the timing of it to maximise the amount of parents to attend.

3) A web based learning package would be useful. This would allow parents to at least understand what the practical course is aiming to achieve.

4) I do feel that maybe this course would be of benefit to school leavers (Year 11), as it would give them a good grounding for when they choose to have a family, therefore trying to be pro-active.

5)...naming it 'parenting programme' possibly makes people feel that if they attend it looks like they have a problem, or are not good parents.

6) I think such programmes can be patronising to parents. Swallow Junior School has placed too much emphasis on behavioural issues, most of these problems stem from a child's home life that is a known fact. The school should concentrate on better teaching...

7) I think a course like this needs good advertising and a lot of information about what's included in the course.

## Appendix G – example of coded interview undertaken by the researcher with a professional (Assistant Director of Children’s Services)

### START OF TRANSCRIPT

Facilitator: Anything that you think you can't answer I've got no worries about.

Interviewee: I shall say I don't know.

Facilitator: Yes. So first, can you outline the authority's policy with regards to delivery of parenting programmes?

Interviewee: Yes, basically we have a commitment and the value of parenting programmes. We have focused though on delivering it to targeted families in a sense, because it is an investment and we need to try and make sure that we're investing in the right - whatever that means - kind of families. Interestingly of course, we're now a part of the Government's pilot for universal parenting, that's at nought to five.

Facilitator: Yes I've noticed that, that was one of my questions. I'll come onto that.

Interviewee: So in terms of our strategy, what we want to do is to make sure that throughout the county there is access to high quality evidence-based parenting programmes which, if possible, can be jointly delivered through partnership working, albeit with schools or the National Health Services. But that will be directed to those parents who have identified themselves as needing it, or possibly more assertive engagement with parents who either schools, other support services feel that to make the kind of changes within the family, they need to be encouraged quite actively. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Have you gone down the route at all of using compulsory orders to force parents into programmes?

Interviewee: We have very limitedly, usually through the Education Welfare Service, in relation to non-attendance. So we've used parenting orders, but that's been fairly minimal. I've talked to head teachers about parenting contracts, but either we haven't advertised it well, or head teachers don't feel that it's appropriate, but it hasn't had the take-up which I thought it might do, which would be interesting from a teacher's perspective. **School involvement in parenting programmes / compulsory attendance on courses**

Facilitator: Yes, at Eagle Junior School we did use parenting contracts quite regularly.

Interviewee: We've got the guidance on what was the extranet, we have an officer as a point of contact, but it's never really taken off. We did do a pilot to try and encourage it in C, and again it wasn't something embraced by the schools. So clearly I think there's a value. **compulsory attendance on courses**

Facilitator: Yes, we used it and we put into them a recommendation to attend parenting programmes.

Interviewee: Yes, which is all you can do within the contract, but within the orders, as I say, we have, but it hasn't been extensive. **Compulsory attendance on courses**

Facilitator: At Eagle Junior School we only had one parent who was forced, as it were, into attending a parenting programme, and it was very

unsuccessful because she came with an agenda, didn't want to engage, actually sat there with her headphones on. So she was attending, but she was not going to engage.

Interviewee: Which is hopeless.

Facilitator: Delivery of programmes in this county. Who have you identified should be the deliverers?

Interviewee: Right, well the primary deliverer is through the parenting co-ordinator, who I know you've met, which is the Webster-Stratton Positive Parents, we call it in the county. Multi-agency team, we were very keen that we wanted people from different disciplines. Slight problem in the sense that people have been trained and then you ask their managers, well you did commit to release them for X number of days a year and then, oh no, we can't spare them.

Then our other major deliverer is the NHS through Understanding Children, Understanding Babies, that group. Then we have got some small numbers which relate to impact and which is linked to the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities, again through the DCC and the Children's Trust partners.

Facilitator: Okay, funding for the NHS one, would it come from the NHS?

Interviewee: It actually comes from the NHS, yes, but the Positive Parents one and the Strengthening Communities one has been the County Council.

**Influences on parenting programmes**

Facilitator: With the choice of Positive Parenting, was that delegated down to say The Parenting Co-ordinator, or was it at director level?

Interviewee: Well it started because we were a pathfinder under the PEIP, I can't remember whether that's still - that one. You said it was P-E-I-P, wasn't it?

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: We were a pathfinder and we looked at the evidence, and it seemed that the Webster-Stratton had at that time the most substantial and robust evidence base in terms of effectiveness. Went for that, turned up in London only to be told that the age group the DfE wanted to focus on, which was eight to 18, Incredible Years hadn't been written for that. So they then had to revamp it, but we still went with it. So that was originally led by myself because I'd written the path for the bid, then we had a parenting deliverer and then the Parenting Co-ordinator was successful in securing that post.

Facilitator: You've decided to continue with that post, haven't you?

Interviewee: We have, which with no actual money coming, but we've linked it into the Intensive Family Service, because that again... **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: Which is the old FIP.

Interviewee: Yes, the old FIP.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: Which then again reinforces our approach to targeted work with families. I can imagine that that would continue; how we respond to the universal bit, I'm not sure.

Facilitator: Was a deliberate plan made not to use school staff? Was it a conscious decision?

Interviewee: Do you know, I can't remember whether it was conscious or unconscious. I seem to remember we advertised it, people who wanted to - but whether we actually advertised it through schools, do you know, I don't honestly know. I think the whole issue - Webster-Stratton is fantastic, but it's very expensive. It's 12 sessions a week - in a... **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: In a session, yes.

Interviewee: They expect there to be double that in the week, so we're talking about 12 days minimum. Then there's potential follow-up, be it phone calls or whatever and the preparation. So I think for a course we're talking about 20 days, which for a course of, what, £10? **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Yes, if that.

Interviewee: If that, is quite an investment on behalf of a school. Now, I'm probably sounding as though I'm being defensive... **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: No, not at all.

Interviewee: ...but we didn't offer it to schools, I can't honestly remember. **School involvement in parenting programmes**

Facilitator: We got funding for our staff to train. We had two learning mentors who were trained at Eagle Junior School. They were trained - funded by [CAMHS] to do that. As part of that though, two places in every [cohort] had to set aside for referrals from the community paediatrician.

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Facilitator: Yes, so we were lucky to get the funding, because it's the training that's costly as well. But what we found was that we would - the first few cohorts got a great number of parents, but once you've gone through your client base, as it were, you've then got to get enough people to actually come through.

Interviewee: Exactly. So which course were you running?

Facilitator: We were using the Incredible Years.

Interviewee: You were?

Facilitator: Yes, we used the Incredible Years.

Interviewee: Well I think it is very well researched and the fact is she had to emphasise fidelity, and the fact it is very intensive means that's probably why it's effective, but it is costly.

Facilitator: Yes. Venues for your courses, what kind of venues do you use?

Interviewee: Well, we use a variety; children's centres, schools, other local authorities, stuff like family support centres. Then we've had to - in some places we've used libraries. It was easier in some places than others. I remember W, I think we spent - in fact we failed in the end, we had to move to another area and then eventually found somewhere in W. So a whole variety.

Facilitator: Any analysis been undertaken to look at the impact when it's carried out in different venues? Does that have an impact?

Interviewee: No. Interesting question. **Measuring impact**

Facilitator: Some of the research points to the fact that in schools it's 50/50 on research. Some say that it has better impact, because the parents are

feeling more associated with the person delivering it and the fact that it is in the school setting. Other's feel that - other research says that parents feel threatened by the fact it's in the school and therefore are reluctant sometimes to engage, because they think there's a hidden agenda.

Interviewee: Interesting.

Facilitator: So mixed research on that one.

Interviewee: Yes absolutely. No we haven't and I shall follow that up.

Facilitator: That's it on that one. Current budgetary pressures, are they impacting on delivery of parenting programmes?

Interviewee: Not yet. **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: No, because you've managed to keep the staffing structure.

Interviewee: Certainly.

Facilitator: Because you've got a parenting coordinator you've kept and then you're using Ed psychs or whatever to deliver, they're already in post, aren't they?

Interviewee: They're already in post. The thing is though, the pressure I had identified in terms of different teams releasing them, if times get harder - which I fear they will before they get better - then the idea of saying to educational psychology, can you release, when you've got schools crying out saying we've got a reduced allocation or whatever. Then I think there's... **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: People are going to have to resort to their core tasks, aren't they, more?

Interviewee: Yes, but one could argue that in terms of really affecting change, maybe this should be a core task. **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: Yes, definitely.

Interviewee: Then we'd have to convince our schools.

Facilitator: Yes.

Interviewee: They're a hard bunch to convince.

Facilitator: Yes. It's making heads see the value of some of the things.

Interviewee: Which is why the evaluation is so important.

Facilitator: Yes. Then onto the evaluation, I know the Parenting Co-ordinator evaluates every programme. Do you know if specific evaluation takes place into those children who would fall normally within the normal ranges of behaviour versus clinical ages?

Interviewee: No, (a) I don't know, but my suspicion is not. **Measuring impact**

Facilitator: My thinking there is a lot of money is going in potentially to parents who self-refer.

Interviewee: I think that's fairly limited, because it goes back to the fact that we do want to direct this at the most targeted. It's a difficult balance. I would say - and it's not something I'd go to court on - 80/90 per cent come through, we think X family would benefit from, rather than going it's you, we want you there. Then there's good work by the schools, by maybe support services who are working with the family saying there's a really good course, let me just take you along. Because actually once the families are there and they find it conducive and they're not having finger wagging and everybody - that they then stay. So most are identified rather than referred. But we did say that

we weren't going to make it exclusively referred, because the research seemed to indicate if you had mixed groups... **Positive affects of parenting programmes**

Facilitator: The research does say that, that they need that balance.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Facilitator: For both perspectives.

Interviewee: Exactly, so you're not feeling as though we're in the naughty parent class. Because when we got it first, I remember doing some radio interviews and them saying you're getting super-nanny, but I think there's also a recognition that even the families where it's less targeted, they can benefit.

Facilitator: Definitely.

Interviewee: But I think the balance is 80 per cent-ish.

Facilitator: Yes, one of the issues that we've had in a semi-rural area is being able to provide defined courses that are local enough, because often these families, they can't or won't travel. We've found that there's W, but for our parents that means going into the city to get the bus out to W.

Interviewee: I know. Actually I would like to revise one of my answers. When you said budgetary pressures, one that is beginning to impact is the transport budget, because we used to provide taxis. We are having to really look at that very seriously because of course taxis cost the most. So what we're saying is that we would provide taxis maybe for one or two, get them hooked and then look at ways in which we could provide other support for transport, maybe bus passes or something, or maybe doing a bit of lifts or... **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: Car-sharing?

Interviewee: Car-sharing, or somebody picking up and we pay the cost of petrol. But that is something where people have said, no we can't afford taxis for 12 weeks. Some people will say, that's very nice. My car's broken down too, can I have a taxi? **Austerity cuts**

Facilitator: From an elected members' point of view, is parenting programmes something that are within their radar?

Interviewee: Yes, I think so, (a) because I think it brought status to the local authority because we're a pathfinder, which is fair enough and (b) because I think through the universal offer and Sarah Teather, it's part of the Coalition Government's policy. We have a Conservative administration, so they're eager to see their policy active within the county. **Influences on parenting programmes**

Facilitator: Do you know why an area within the county been chosen, do you know why it was chosen? It seems as if it was chosen to be a rural.

Interviewee: It was chosen - I think if somebody said to the DfE, choose three areas which are completely different from each other, they've done brilliantly. **Influences on parenting programmes**

Facilitator: They have.

Interviewee: When I spoke to this very nice woman, that seemed to be they wanted a discreet area where there were about 10,000 families or something - I can't remember the number - but which had great differences from the other two. **Influences on parenting programmes**

Facilitator: So it wasn't chosen for particular need as such, just a locality issue.

Interviewee: No, it was a locality issue. What of course mucked them up a little bit is of course it crosses two pieces of primary care trust areas

Facilitator: Right okay, which would be interesting for the research in itself.

Interviewee: Absolutely, yes.

Facilitator: There will be areas within this area that is actually high deprivation.

Interviewee: Absolutely. It's A, as you know. Glorious tourist-riddled A has got some areas and some families with extreme need. My further worry is that as it is so universal, whether that will touch those families where we do feel they need possibly more support, and the fact that they're only £100 per family is - I don't know what can be quite delivered on that.

Facilitator: So funding on that budget from the pilot will be Department for Education funded?

Interviewee: Absolutely, yes. They're saying it's going to be £100 per family. If the two parents are split and live in different accommodation they get £100 each, but if they live together it's £100.

Facilitator: Are they expecting the authority to deliver that programme for them?

Interviewee: You can bid.

Facilitator: Right, I noticed something about that. You would bid with a certain programme, so you'd go to them and say we do the Incredible Years programme, say?

Interviewee: Yes, but actually, interestingly, for £100 what we're having to do - I mean we're exploring bidding at the moment. I think they have to be in by the 13<sup>th</sup>, so probably the end of this week or something. I can't remember really. No, that's Tuesday. We couldn't deliver, so actually we're looking at something which is based on best practice, has got the core elements of parenting, but is basically three sessions which would either be group, telephone or e-learning.

Facilitator: Yes, I can't remember the exact programme, it was an Australia programme for...

Interviewee: Is that PPP?

Facilitator: Yes it is, I think. That's similar, it's got universal level, which is almost campaign by papers, et cetera, going up.

Interviewee: But I'm not quite sure, given it's nought to five, I suppose you could have nought on - one bit on babies, one bit on toddlers and one bit on readiness for school. I don't know.

Facilitator: No. From the point of view of the Department for Education, obviously they were very hands-on under the last administration, especially around parenting programmes. Has there been a change in that emphasis since the new Coalition came in?

Interviewee: No, I think what's happened is possibly that they see two ends of the spectrum. So there's the universality of this programme and then there's a kind of assertive, gripping, which is associated with what was [unclear] is now the Intensive Family Service, because Mr Pickles talks about the 120,000 families which are the worst families in the country and there he definitely sees gripping is the - and assertive work is the way forward. Then you've got the universality. I think possibly -



personal view - the previous government had a more cover all the bases kind of stuff, but that might be unfair. Influences on parenting programmes

Facilitator: Sure. Okay, that's it from me.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**

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## **Appendix I – copy of parental consent form**

### **Incredible Years Parenting Programme Research project**

I am very pleased to hear that you have enrolled on the parenting programme at the school – I hope that you find the course very rewarding.

Whilst you are on the programme I would like to track the progress that you and your children are making, both in school and at home to see if the programme is having the desired impact. I will be using this evidence for a research project I am undertaking at the University of Birmingham. The research project has a working title of 'Implementing, delivering and understanding a parenting programme in a mainstream school: a case study'.

Before you start the programme I would like to meet with you to ask you questions regarding your expectations of the course - we will then meet again at the end of the programme and ask some questions again. These interviews will help us to analyse if the programme has been successful for you. The interviews will be taped but once the interviews have been transcribed the tapes will be erased.

In addition to the interviews the course facilitators will use their normal questionnaires to help them assess the impact of the course. I will also use these questionnaires as part of my research.

At school I will examine if there has been any impact on your child in school. To assess this I will be asking the teachers a number of questions and ask them to log your child's behaviour and complete a questionnaire.

If you provide your address you will be given a summary paper outlining the findings once completed.

**At no point will the research identify you or your child(ren).**

If you are happy to be part of this research please complete the form overleaf.

Many thanks for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Mansell

Research project: Implementing, delivering and understanding a parenting programme in a mainstream school: a case study

University: University of Birmingham

Researcher: Christopher Mansell

Name of parent:

Name of children at Swallow Junior School whose progress will be tracked:

I agree to the following:

- I confirm that the research has been explained to me
- I understand that the researcher will not use my name, or those of my children in the research
- Any tapes of my interviews will be destroyed after they have been transcribed
- I agree to my child's progress being tracked for the research
- I know that at any point I can opt out of the research element of the parenting programme but will be able to continue to participate in the parenting programme

Signed:

Print name:

Date:

Address (optional):

## **Appendix J – summary of research given to parents**

### **UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM RESEARCH PROJECT**

#### **PARENTING PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS**

You will recall that I interviewed you for my research for a Masters degree in 2010, and tracked your progress on the parenting programme at school. I have now completed the research, and as promised, here is a summary of my findings from that research:

During the period of the last Labour government schools were actively encouraged, and funded, to provide extended services to support parents. A number of schools decided to support families through the delivery of parenting programmes. Given that there was a lack of research into parenting programmes when delivered in mainstream school settings the research sought to gain understanding of their impact in this context. The research examined a cohort of parents participating in a programme in a mainstream school setting. In addition, key policy makers, both locally and nationally, were interviewed in order to gain knowledge of the influences on delivering parenting programmes.

The research concluded that national policy was moving from a 'reactionary' to a 'preventative' model of delivering parenting programmes (i.e. getting support into families before a problem occurred); this was being replicated in the local authority examined. Funding mechanisms for school had recently changed, removing the necessity for schools to support families; equally Ofsted was placing less emphasis on this aspect of the work of a school. Evidence from the fieldwork suggested there had been some improvements in the relationship between the parents and children studied; data regarding improvements in the children's behaviour at the school was less robust.



Many thanks for participating in the research. As I assured you when we met, my research does not contain any reference to you or your children's names, equally the name of the school and the local authority it serves are also not included.

I hope that the parenting programme has continued to be useful to you, and wish you, and your family, the best of luck for the future.

Christopher Mansell

**Appendix K – example of an interview schedule (interview questions from the parenting programme facilitators)**

**19<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**Semi structured interview of Positive Parenting Facilitators**

1. What successes have you identified in this cohort?
2. Which elements of the course were most successful?
3. Which elements do you feel have the least impact?
4. Have you received regular supervision during the course?
5. What issues did you take to supervision?
6. Did any parents comment on the course being held within a school setting?
7. Did you have any contact with members of the school staff?
8. Did you stick rigidly to the course manual?
9. How many parents attended the course?
10. Did the low number of parents on the course have an impact?
11. What have attendance levels been like on the course?
12. What reasons have parents given for non-attendance?
13. Did any parents get in touch with you between each session?
14. Have any parents asked for continued support / other courses?